TENKO SUN COMICS

あまつき 12

高山しのぶ

エロ
一迅社

ISBN978-4-7580-5540-6

C9979 ¥552E

雑誌 50664-53

定価：本体552円＋税

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あまつき 12

Special Edition

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SHINOBU TAKAYAMA

ZERO-SUM COMICS

あまつき 12

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Umatsuki

TAKAYAMA SHINOBU

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Hizame

AMATSUKI
VOL 12
BY
Takayama
Shinobu

人物紹介

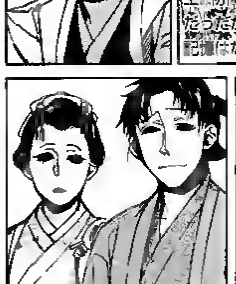
六合鴉時…柔軟な性格の高校生。天網を書き換える力を持つ「白紙の者」でもある。銀朱の記憶を見せてもらいこの世界の成り立ちを知った。

銀朱…こちらに迷い込んだ、鴉時の同級生。初代の「白紙の者」だったが、現在はその記憶はない。

霧華…冥天と共に白緑に育てられた狼妖。人間は嫌いだが助けてくれた鴉時には懐いている。

冥天…妖の頂的存在で、全ての理を読み解くことができる四天の一人。銀朱と深い縁を持つ。

緋狸…過去に八百比丘尼と呼ばれていた不老不死の半妖。陰陽寮の参謀的役割。



黒鷹(右)・紅(左)…陰陽寮に属する兄妹。紅が元凶遠きで、黒鷹は優しいの力を持つ。

✻あらすじ✻

最先端のCG技術で江戸の町を再現した大江戸幕末巡回展を訪れた鴉時は、妖、夜行と神に襲われ、幕末の江戸に良く似た異世界に迷い込んでしまう。

外界から入ってきた鴉時に、彼は帝天の決めた運命「天網」を変える特殊な力を持っていた。その能力を欲した人と人の双方から助力を求められるが、鴉時はどちらにも与せず己の見つけた道を選んだ。

その結果、銀朱は独力で帝天に挑み、敗れてしまう。銀朱はその存在を塗り換えられ、更には今までの事件に関わった人々の記憶までも書き換えられてしまった。

その事実に腹を立てた鴉時は、帝天に対抗すべく、協力者を増やす努力を始めた。紆余曲折の末、陰陽寮と露草達の協力を得るとこころまで漕ぎつけた鴉時達の前に、夜行とその支配下の妖が現れ、襲いかかってきた。

なんとか夜行や夜行の操る妖を撃退したものの、朽葉と真朱、そして、「本当の銀朱」の体が夜行の闇の中に連れ去られてしまう。

戦いの中で負った鴉時の傷も癒え、帝天と戦うため力を蓄える妖と陰陽寮達。そして、ようやく目を覚ました冥天は——。

.....
.....
UTSU-BUSH!!!
I, um, I'm really sorry, but I, um, I thought we needed help...
BEWARE LOUD
SO WHY THE HELL DID YOU BRING HIM HERE!?

CHAPTER 48 - CREEPING CLOVER FLOWERS

.....
SFX: GLAAARE
OKAY, THIS IS IMPORTANT.
SO I DON'T WANT YOU BREATHING A WORD OF THIS TO ANYBODY ELSE, GOT IT?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?! YOU'RE SO DAMNED ANNOYING!
S...
SORRY
I WAS JUST CURIOUS.
IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY, THEN JUST FUCKING SAY IT!
LOOK..
WHAT?
HIS NECK.
HM?
GASP
AAAA

—THAT WOUND WAS MADE BY THE BITE OF THAT GIRL'S INUGAMI.
MY MEDICINES DON'T HAVE ANY EFFECT ON IT.
INUGAMI—?
!
I SEE.
UTSUBUSHI WAS RIGHT.
!
OH.
GULP
Even Kon is feeling better—
IT'S ALMOST FULLY HEALED, REALLY! THAT'S THANKS TO TSUYUKUSA. HE BROUGHT MEDICINAL HERBS FOR EVERYONE...

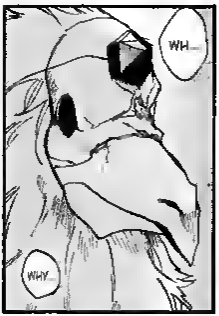
I'M SO OOOOOO GLAD YOU WOKE UP
SFX: RUUUN GLOMP
SFX: CRASH
I NEED SOME MONEY...
THIS TIME, I SLEPT A LITTLE TOO LONG...
SFX: SLAM
BON...
BOSS!!

SORRY
IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN
...?
QUACK DOCTOR ?
SUGU-TAKE YOU DON'T MEAN.
I borrowed some money from my granny, but I lent it to that quack doctor and he hasn't paid me back! I'm so hungry~~~~
WHAT'S WRONG, SUGUTAKE-SAN?
I SEE...
I guess it's only fair payback...?
sniffle sniffle
whine
So pitiful!
SFX CRACK
AND THAT BRAT TSUYU-KUSA, TOO!!
IT'S ALL HIS FAULT!
HE DRAGGED ME INTO THIS!
I mean, I was just following orders, boss!
Eeee!
Whoa, whoa, whoa!
RIGHT?
HUH?
BOSS... YOU MUSTA KNOWN HE WAS WITH THE ONMYOU BUREAU...
TSUYU-KUSA. AND THE ONMYOU BUREAU?

DUDE. WHAT IS UP WITH YOUR HAND? THAT'S SO GROSS!
GYU
WHAA-AAAT!?
He just noticed?
Idiot.
Please don't kill me.
SO FIRST I WANT TO TELL YOU SOMETHING
UH, OKAY
SIGH
ANYWAY, WE HAVE A LOT TO TALK ABOUT, BUT YOU CAN TELL ME LATER
THERE'S JUST TOO MUCH.
T/N HE HAS HIS RIGHT EYE CLOSED
HMM..
EVEN IF I LOOK LIKE THIS, I CAN'T WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS

I'M NO LONGER "BONTEN"
I SUPPOSE I'M ONCE AGAIN A POWERLESS AYAKASHI

I'M NO LONGER UNDER TEITEN'S DIVINE PROTECTION.
I CAN NEITHER READ HEAVEN'S NET, NOR UNTANGLE ITS THREADS


WH...
WHY...

WH...

I'VE..
INCURRED TEITEN'S WRATH
HE'S A SELFISH BASTARD ISN'T HE?

THAT'S...
THAT'S WHY I NEED YOUR HELP
IT'S FOR TSUYU-KUSA AND UTSUB-USHI...
HUH?
NOW THAT MY POWERS ARE GONE, I CAN'T DO ANYTHING FOR THEM.
THEIR EXIST-ENCES ARE INHER-ENTLY UN-STABLE.
BUT IF THEY'RE BY YOUR SIDE,
THEY WON'T DISAPPEAR.

I'M BEG-GING YOU.
F...
DON'T BE AN IDIOT
YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO MAKE THIS KIND OF DECISION...
TSUYU-KUSA
FUCK THIS SHIT!!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?

I WON'T BE ABLE TO RE-PLACE THAT ANY MORE
IF IT'S TORN, YOU'LL DIS/P-PEAR.
!!!
WHAT THE FUCK IS TEITEN'S PROB-LEM !?
WHY DID THIS HAPPEN?
TELL ME!!
!!!
!!!
EVEN IF I TOLD YOU,
YOU WOULDN'T UNDER-STAND
SFX. SHOCK
YOU BASTARD...

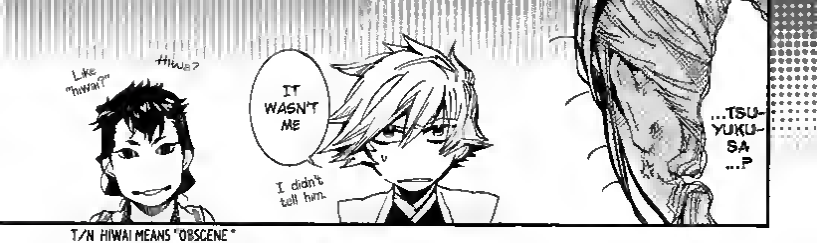
SFX YANK
THAT'S ENOUGH!!
GAAH!!

SFX SNICKER
Hey, maybe it's time you thought about changing your image, huh?
QW
QW
Don't try this at home, kids.

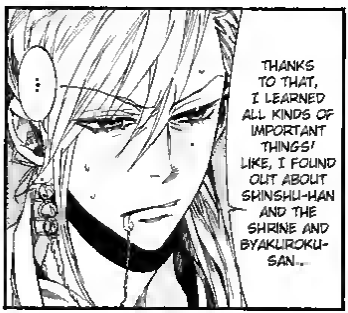
YOU REALLY ARE "HIWA," AREN'T YOU?

.....

SO YOU'RE THINKING, "OH, I'M JUST PROTECTING TSUYUKUSA BY NOT TELLING HIM ANYTHING," RIGHT?
YEESH



T/N HIWAI MEANS "OBSCENE"


...
THANKS TO THAT, I LEARNED ALL KINDS OF IMPORTANT THINGS! LIKE, I FOUND OUT ABOUT SHINSHU-HAN AND THE SHRINE AND BYAKUROKU-SAN...

I SHOWED HIM ALL OF YOUR SECRETS
ahahaha
hahahahaha
SO I KNOW ALL ABOUT THE LITTLE BIRD WHO VISITED GINSHU-SAN EVERY DAY FOR AN ENTIRE WINTER!
!?
x mental image

SFX: SQUEEEEEZE
THOSE THINGS ARE BETWEEN THE PRINCESS AND ME ...!!
HEY, NOW!
JUST HOW FAR DID YOU GO!?
OWWW!
OWWWWWWW!
H..
HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ...!!?

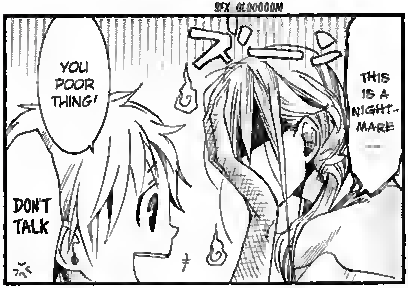
SFX: SPLAT
GAA

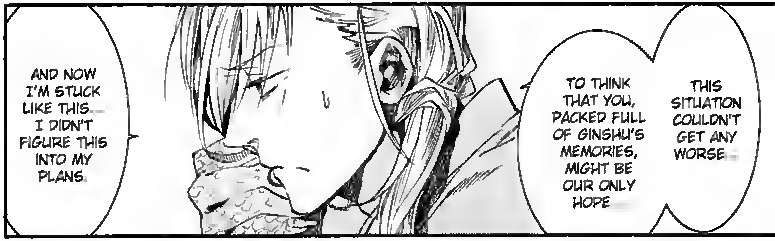
T/N: TOKI AS GINSHU
HE HAD A GOOD REASON, SO CALM YOURSELF DOWN, OTOROSHI-MODOKI-SAN!

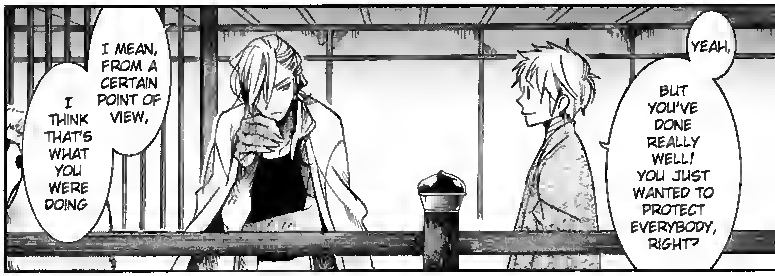
BUT I THINK THE BUTTERFLY THAT CAME OUT OF MY EYEPATCH MUST HAVE BEEN A PIECE OF GINSHU-SAN'S "SOUL."
Oh, it's morning.
sigh
...EVEN THOUGH THE MEMORIES BELONG TO GINSHU-SAN, I FEEL LIKE I'VE LIVED THROUGH THEM TOO...
I DON'T REALLY UNDER-STAND IT THAT WELL.
YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN, RIGHT?
SHUT THE HELL UP!!
UH... I GUESS NOT
.....
NO
I DON'T UNDER-STAND EVERYTHING BUT I UNDER-STAND ENOUGH.
CHEER UP, HIWA!
DON'T WORRY, HIWA!
DON'T SAY THAT NAME!!
SFX: SMILE

!!

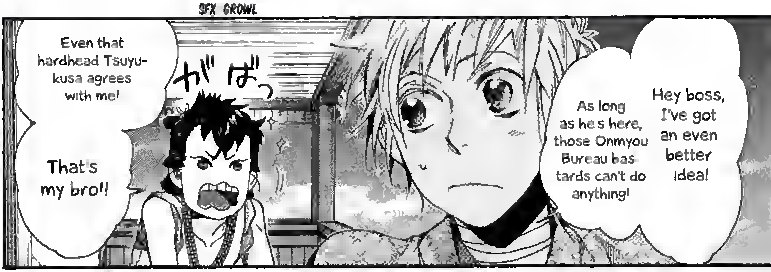
Hm!
WELL, WHAT SHOULD I CALL YOU NOW, THEN?
BYAKU-ROKU?


SFX: GLOOOOOM
ズーン
THIS IS A NIGHT-MARE
YOU POOR THING!
DON'T TALK

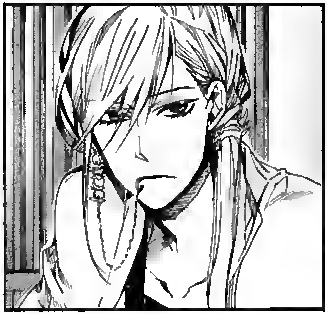

AND NOW I'M STUCK LIKE THIS... I DIDN'T FIGURE THIS INTO MY PLANS.
TO THINK THAT YOU, PACKED FULL OF GINSHU'S MEMORIES, MIGHT BE OUR ONLY HOPE...
THIS SITUATION COULDN'T GET ANY WORSE...

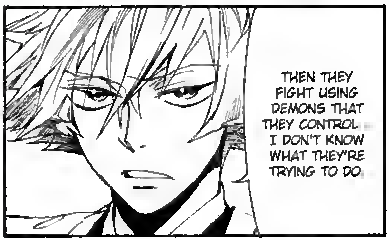

I THINK THAT'S WHAT YOU WERE DOING
I MEAN, FROM A CERTAIN POINT OF VIEW,
YEAH,
BUT YOU'VE DONE REALLY WELL! YOU JUST WANTED TO PROTECT EVERYBODY, RIGHT?

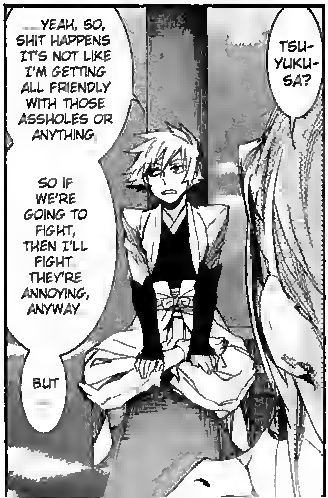
I'VE ALWAYS LIKED YOU, FROM THE VERY BEGIN-NING!
I MEAN, YOU HAVEN'T BEEN LYING TO ME OR ANYTHING, RIGHT?
SO WHY DO I FEEL SO COMPLETELY GROSSED OUT, THEN ?
BUT THE STAKES ARE SO HIGH THAT WE'VE JUST GOT TO MAKE THAT GAMBLE
WELL, I DUNNO IF I'D GO THAT FAR..
SO, AS CRAZY AS IT SOUNDS, YOU REALLY THINK THE ONMYOU BUREAU AND THE AYAKASHI CAN GET ALONG?
...HMM? YOU REALLY ARE SHAME-LESS


SFX GROWL
Even that hardhead Tsuyukusa agrees with me!
That's my bro!!
Hey boss, I've got an even better idea!
As long as he's here, those Onmyou Bureau bastards can't do anything!

FIRST, THEY LOCK TOKI UP IN A JAIL CELL.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THOSE BASTARDS WANT.




THEN THEY FIGHT USING DEMONS THAT THEY CONTROL. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE TRYING TO DO.


TSU-YUKU-SA?
...YEAH. SO, SHIT HAPPENS. IT'S NOT LIKE I'M GETTING ALL FRIENDLY WITH THOSE ASSHOLES OR ANYTHING.
SO IF WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT, THEN I'LL FIGHT. THEY'RE ANNOYING, ANYWAY.
BUT...

WELL...
SO MAYBE FIGHT-ING THEM ISN'T SUCH A GREAT IDEA.

I THINK THAT AS LONG AS HUMANS AND DEMONS THINK OF EACH OTHER AS ENEMIES, WE'LL NEVER STOP TEITEN FROM DESTROYING EVERYTHING.
SO INSTEAD OF FIGHTING OVER LITTLE THINGS, WOULDN'T IT BE BETTER IF EVERYBODY CAME TOGETHER AND HELPED ME?
I JUST WANT TO BRING EVERY-ONE BACK!
...SO YOU'VE DECIDED TO SAVE THIS WORLD BY BECOMING ITS RULER?
ahu ha ha
I DIDN'T SAY THAT
THEY WERE ALL T KEN AW Y BY TEITEN AND THE YAKOU
THAT ONMYOU BUREAU GUY...
BY KUROKU-S N,
GINSHU-SAN AND SHINSHU-CHAN,
KUCHIHA,

THE BONDS OF FRIENDSHIP...
I DON'T WANT TO BECOME THE DESTROYER OF AMATSUKI, BUT I DON'T WANT TO BECOME ITS MASTER EITHER.
TO SAVE AMATSUKI WOULD YOU BECOME ITS MASTER?
I DON'T REALLY WANT TO BE USED BY YOU, EITHER.
"TWO PATHS HAVE BEEN PREPARED FOR YOU", HUH?
I WANT TO BE FRIENDS.
BON-TEN!
BUT FOR ME ALONE, THE PATHS ARE INFINITE.
...YOU CERTAINLY DO DRIVE A HARD BARGAIN.
I SUP-POSE THERE MIGHT BE AN-OTHER WAY
WHAT IF...?

WHAT IF SOMEONE HAD SAID THAT LONG AGO? WOULD THINGS HAVE TURNED OUT DIFFERENTLY?
I'LL DO AS YOU WISH.
BUT TSUYUKUSA, I BET YOU HAVE A LOT OF QUESTIONS, RIGHT?
!
AHA HA HA!
HUH!?
WELL, MAYBE WE SHOULD START BY INTERVIEWING PEOPLE...
UM.
SO, UM... WHAT, SPECIFICALLY, WOULD YOU HAVE US DO?

I THINK SHE'S GOING TO BE IMPORTANT TO US IN THE FUTURE, SO THERE'S SOMEONE I WANT TO TALK TO...
SHE'S THE ONE...
WHO HELPED ME DRAW OUT MY POWER...
WHEN I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO USE IT AT ALL...
You sure seem to have a lot of free time every day, sis.
Aha ha ha!
My sister is very skilled, so...
OH~

SFX: TALK TALK
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
EX-CUSE ME?
YOU CAN'T EVEN GET INTO THE NAGA-YA
grunt

SFX: CHATTER CHATTER
WHAT'S WITH THAT CROWD?
OH MY...

Tatsugorou from Wo-Gumi ...!?
IT'S TATSUGOROU FROM WO-GUMI!
HE'S HERE. HE'S HERE!
HE'S SHINMON TATSU-GOROU!!!
HE CAN EVEN SOOTHE CRYING CHILDREN!! HE'S THE HERO OF ALL EDO!!
HE'S SAID TO HAVE THREE THOUSAND DEVOTED FOLLOW-ERS!!
HE'S A FIRE FIGHTER A CONSTRUCTION WORKER AN HERBALIST AND A GANGSTER! HE'S THE GATE KEEPER OF SEN SOUJI TEMPLE!!
THE FAMOUS LEADER OF WO-GUMI!!!
WHAT!? A PRETTY GIRL LIKE YOU DOESN'T KNOW TATSUGOROU FROM WO-GUMI?!
わおおおお!
No way, that's the guy!?
OH MY..
...This Tatsu-gorou is really some-thing...

T/N: "WO-GUMI" MEANS "WO GROUP," WHERE "WO" IS THE LAST LETTER OF THE JAPANESE ALPHABET. SO IT'S KIND OF LIKE "Z GROUP"

WELL, IT TOOK HIM LONG ENOUGH. HE'S HAD NO "PURPOSE" ALL THIS TIME.
I DON'T KNOW WHEN HE'LL BE BACK. I HAVEN'T HEARD ANYTHING.
HE'D BETTER COME BACK FAST, OR THERE WILL BE TROUBLE

KEIKI-SAN,
YOU CAN LEAVE THE REST TO US.
YOU SHOULD HEAD BACK HOME.
YES, SIR!

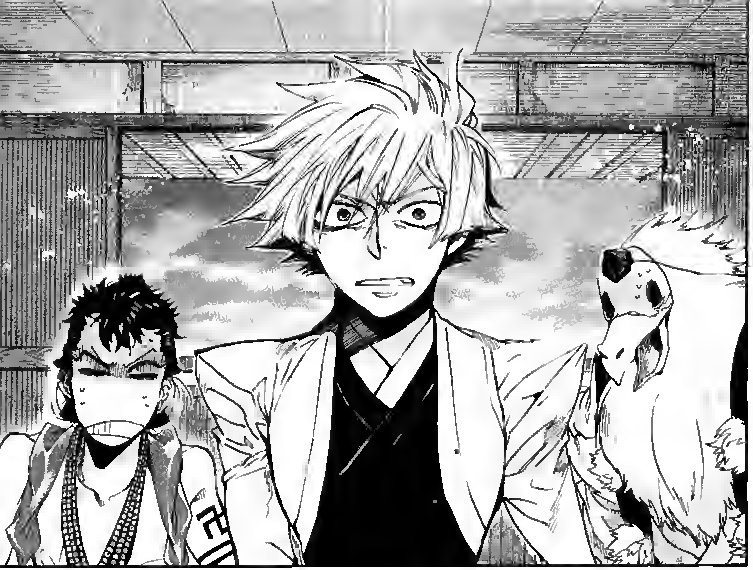
Ee eee!!
What are you planning to do to him ...!?

TOKI !!

*T/N note from page 27.

He uses polite euphemisms that signify an unsavory sort of guy. Firefighters in the Edo period were local thugs who demanded protection money from townspeople and often engaged in fistfights with rival fire companies. "Tobishoku" were construction workers who worked up on flimsy bamboo scaffolding. It was a dangerous job that attracted a lot of itinerants. A "yashi", written with the kanji for "perfume maker", was a charlatan who sold various herbal remedies and potions. "Kyoukaku," literally "humanitarian," was what a lot of gangsters called themselves back in the Edo period. Even now, many Yakuza gang members claim to be "kyoukaku." And Sensouji Temple in Asakusa was considered to be the center of Edo's "shitamachi," or "low town," where non-samurai citizens lived. So the "gatekeeper of Sensouji" is the guy in control of urban Edo.

CHAPTER 69: ILLUSORY BONDS



I GUESS I ALREADY KNOW PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING ABOUT IT,
BUT DO YOU GUYS HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

SO...
ANYWAY...
AS FOR BONTEN'S PAST,
silence~

SO HE GRANTED THAT LITTLE GIRL'S WISH AND CREATED "GINSHU", RIGHT...?
Mumble... Mumble
W...
WELL... BON WAS TRYING TO SAVE THIS WORLD,

BON WAS...
HE AND THE PRINCESS WERE ONCE GOOD FRIENDS...
HE DOESN'T TALK ABOUT IT NOW, BUT THERE'S SOME CONNECTION BETWEEN THEM.

...YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT

MOST LIKELY, BON WAS WORKING FOR TEITEN.
IS THAT REALLY TRUE...!?

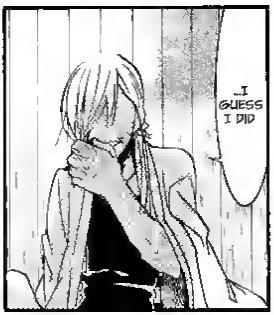
...!
TSUYU-KUSA!?
SFX: SMASH
D...
DON'T FUCK WITH ME!!
YOU TRAITOR!!
YOU REALLY ARE A JACKASS!!
YOU GAVE BYAKU-ROKU'S BODY TO A HUMAN!?
YOU'RE JUST AS BAD AS THE BASTARDS WHO KILLED HIM!!
YOU MUST HAVE BEEN WORKING WITH THEM TO MURDER HIM!!!

..Byakuroku was right, wasn't he...?
He was... he was always worried about you.
Maybe he knew all along that you would kill him.
He was always by your side...
Always talking about you...
..But then,

DESPITE ALL THAT..!!
YOU BECAME TEITEN'S SLAVE...
AND BETRAYED ALL OF US!!

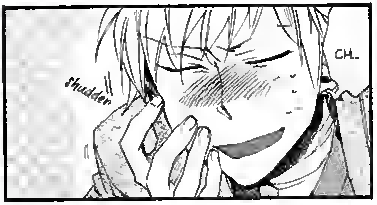
YOU ...!!
SFX: PUNCH

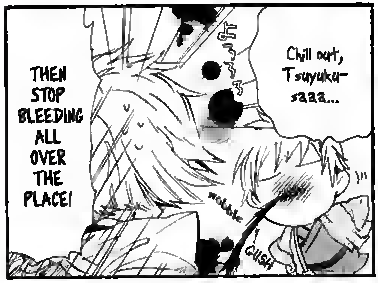
SFX: GLARE

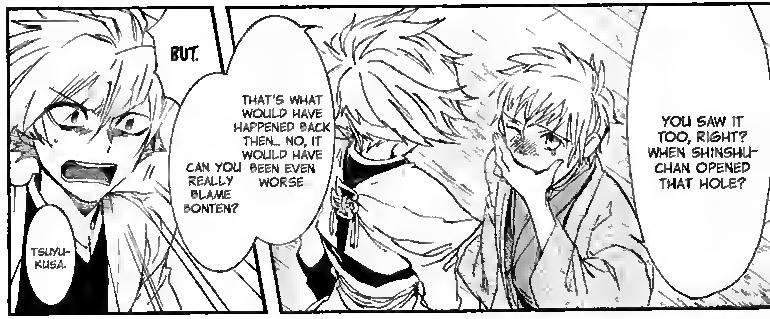

..I GUESS I DID

TOKI!?
You again!
SFX: WAAAAAAAAAH

G44
444H
AHH!!
!?


CH..
Shudder


Chill out, Tsuyuka-sssss...
THEN STOP BLEEDING ALL OVER THE PLACE!
Wobble
GUSH

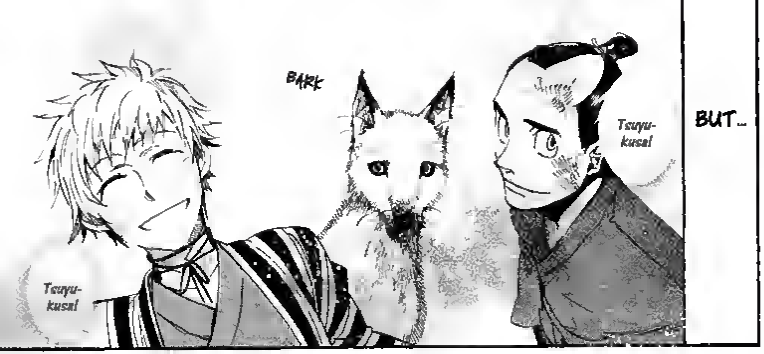

YOU SAW IT TOO, RIGHT? WHEN SHINSHU-CHAN OPENED THAT HOLE?
THAT'S WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED BACK THEN... NO, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EVEN WORSE.
BUT.
CAN YOU REALLY BLAME BONTEN?
TSUYU-KUSA.

GINSHU-SAN AND BYAKU-ROKU-SAN WERE FACING OFF...
EVERY-THING WAS A SEA OF BLOOD...
AND...
AND AT THE CENTER OF IT WAS A LITTLE GIRL.
RIGHT BEFORE HIS EYES, A HUGE HOLE OPENED LIKE THE MOUTH OF HELL...
I CAN ONLY GUESS AT WHAT BONTEN MUST HAVE BEEN FEELING
GINSHU-SAN'S CONSCIOUSNESS WAS FADING, SO I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED THEN.
Hiwa,
Tsuyukusa.
FULL OF COUNTLESS AYAKASHI.
RIGHT BEHIND BONTEN WAS BYAKU-ROKU-SAN'S FOREST,
To you...
I ENTRUST THIS FOREST...
AND TSUYUKUSA...

HE HELD YOU IN HIS ARMS!
HE CARRIED OUT BYAKUROKU-SAN'S LAST WISH!
THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY!
IT WAS A DESPERATE SITUATION! CAN YOU BLAME HIM FOR DOING WHAT HE HAD TO DO TO SAVE YOU!?
STOP IT

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT CRAP I ALREADY KNOW.
YOU DON'T NEED TO STAND UP FOR ME
UH, I WASN'T REALLY DOING IT FOR YOU...
I FIGURED TSUYUKUSA WOULD UNDERSTAND ONCE HE COOLED HIS HEAD, SO I HAD TO STOP HIM!
HEY!
SNEEK
SO ANYWAY, TSUYUKUSA,
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO'S SAD.
SHINSHU-CHAN WAS SO SAD THAT SHE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO DESTROY THE WHOLE WORLD.
GINSHU-SAN AND SHINSHU-CHAN, BYAKUROKU-SAN AND TSUYUKUSA...
HUMAN OR DEMON, IS THERE REALLY ANY DIFFERENCE...
...!!
BETWEEN THOSE TWO PAIRS?
SFX: SHOCK

YOU'RE A HUMAN!!
WHAT DO YOU KNOW!?
SFX: GRAB
I MAY BE A HUMAN BUT I'M ALSO YOUR FRIEND!!
I'M A...
HUMAN...


BARK
Tsuyu-kusa!
Tsuyu-kusa!
BUT...

We are the same,
RIGHT?

SFX: SHOVE

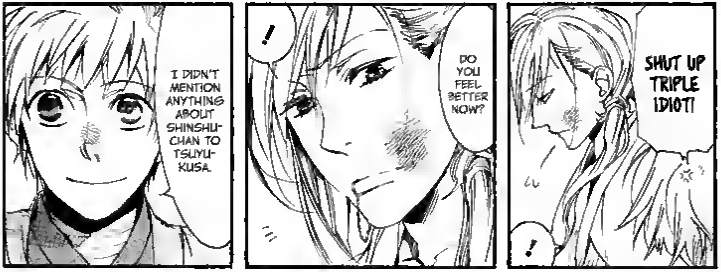
WAH!
TSUYU-KUSA...

HEH.
LOOKS LIKE YOUR PREACHING FELL ON DEAF EARS
AH...

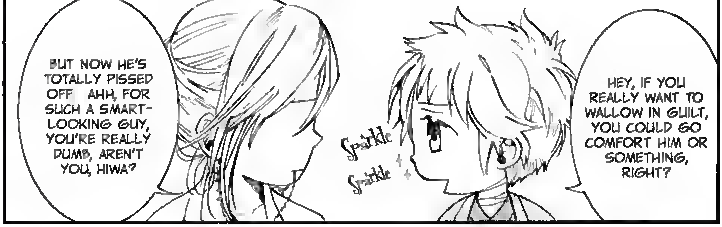
TSUYU-KUSA!
SFX. JUMP

TSUYU-KUSA... IS REALLY A NICE GUY
NAH, I DON'T THINK SO
HE JUST NEEDS TO SORT OUT HIS FEELINGS... GIVE HIM TIME TO THINK.

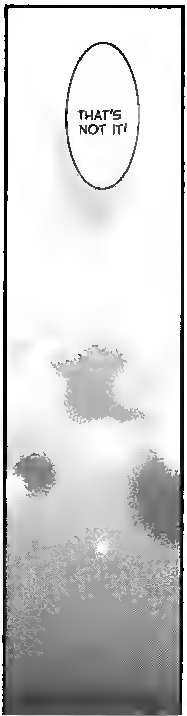
YOU ARE A JACKASS.
YOU'VE GOT MOLDY DAIFUKU FOR BRAINS. GET OUT
Hee Hee Hee
AT THIS RATE, HE'S GOING TO GET ALL THE GIRLS!

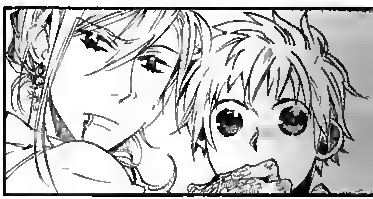

I DIDN'T MENTION ANYTHING ABOUT SHINSHU-CHAN TO TSUYU-KUSA.
!
DO YOU FEEL BETTER NOW?
SHUT UP TRIPLE IDIOT!
!

A LITTLE
THEY WERE FRIENDS, RIGHT, JUST LIKE GINSHU-SAN AND YOU?
SO YOU KNEW ABOUT THAT TOO, HUH?
!
!
BUT BECAUSE OF TEITEN, THEIR FRIEND-SHIP WAS DESTROYED
MAYBE TSUYUKUSA DOESN'T REMEMBER THAT...
OR IF HE DID REMEMBER, HE DID HIS BEST TO FORGET
HE LOST THE CLOSEST THING HE HAD TO A PARENT, AND HE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY... SO HE GREW TO HATE HUMANS
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY TO HIM, SO I DIDN'T SAY ANY-THING.
I DID WHAT I DID FOR THE SAKE OF THIS WORLD
AND BECAUSE IT WAS TEITEN'S WILL.
BUT...
YOU REALLY ARE AN IDIOT!


BUT NOW HE'S TOTALLY PISSED OFF AHH, FOR SUCH A SMART-LOOKING GUY, YOU'RE REALLY DUMB, AREN'T YOU, HIWA?
Sparkle Sparkle
HEY, IF YOU REALLY WANT TO WALLOW IN GUILT, YOU COULD GO COMFORT HIM OR SOMETHING, RIGHT?

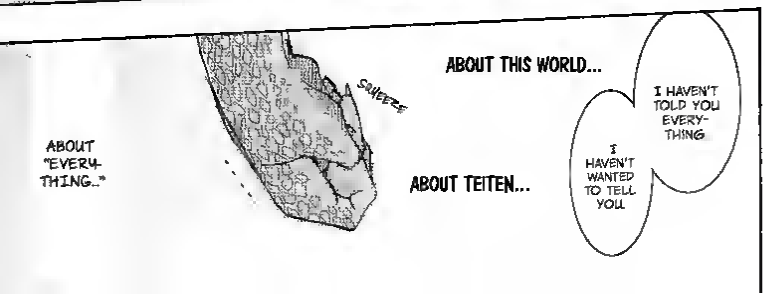
SFX: CRUSH CRUSH CRUSH



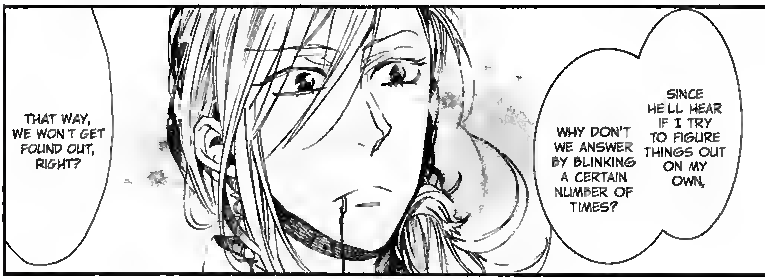


A LONG TIME AGO,
HE GOT MANIPULATED BY TEITEN.
BUT ALL THIS TIME, HE'S BEEN SECRETLY FIGHTING AGAINST HIM ON HIS OWN.
SO YOU CAN TRUST HIM!

IS THAT OKAY WITH YOU?
IT'S COOL WITH ME!
I...
.....

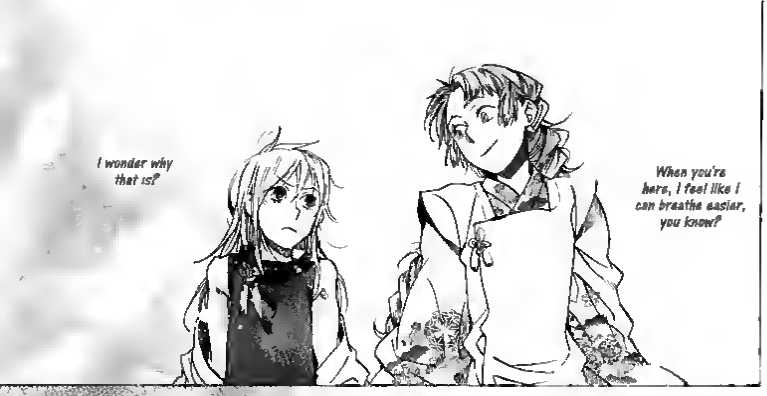

I HAVEN'T TOLD YOU EVERY-THING
I HAVEN'T WANTED TO TELL YOU
ABOUT THIS WORLD...
ABOUT TEITEN...
SQUEEZE
ABOUT "EVERY-THING.."

IF THAT'S THE CASE, WE NEED SOMETHING SAFER...
THAN OUR EARS
TEITEN CAN LISTEN IN ON OUR CONVER-SATIONS, RIGHT?
OH, YEAH, THAT'S OKAY EVEN IF YOU TOLD ME, I PROBABLY WOULDN'T GET IT
.....
SFX: STUPID


THAT WAY, WE WON'T GET FOUND OUT, RIGHT?
WHY DON'T WE ANSWER BY BLINKING A CERTAIN NUMBER OF TIMES?
SINCE HE'LL HEAR IF I TRY TO FIGURE THINGS OUT ON MY OWN.

I DON'T KNOW...
Won't we get caught?
NO WAY IS THAT EVER GOING TO WORK.

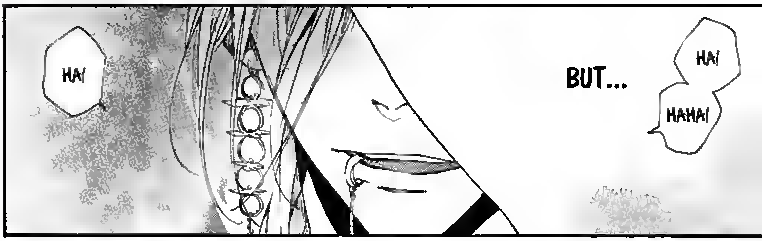
I CAN BREATHE EASIER.
Breathe


I wonder why that is?
When you're here, I feel like I can breathe easier, you know?

HA...
HAHA...
EXHALE
INHALE

AND YOU CAN'T TELL ME ANY-THING...
BUT I CAN'T SAY ANY-THING...

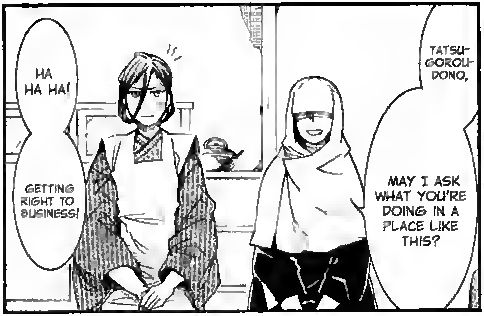
AND SO MANY THINGS I WANT YOU TO TELL ME.
THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS I WANT TO SAY...


HA!
BUT...
HA!
HAHA!

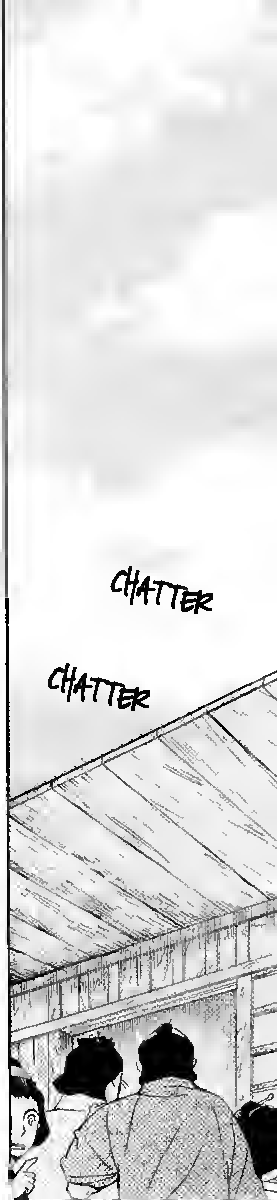
I'VE BEEN BITING MY TONGUE FOR SO LONG...
I FEEL LIKE I HAVE FOR-GOTTEN HOW TO BREATHE.

CRACK
CRACK

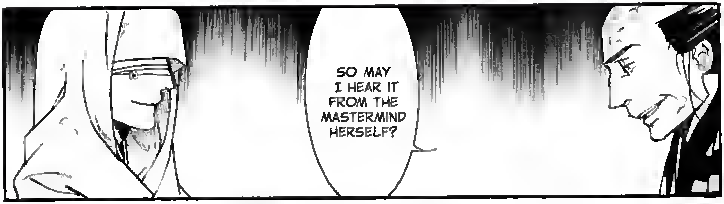
DIVINE PROVIDENCE MUST HAVE BROUGHT YOU HERE
WELL, THERE'S A FACE I DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE


HA HA HA!
GETTING RIGHT TO BUSINESS!
TATSUGOROU-DONO,
MAY I ASK WHAT YOU'RE DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?

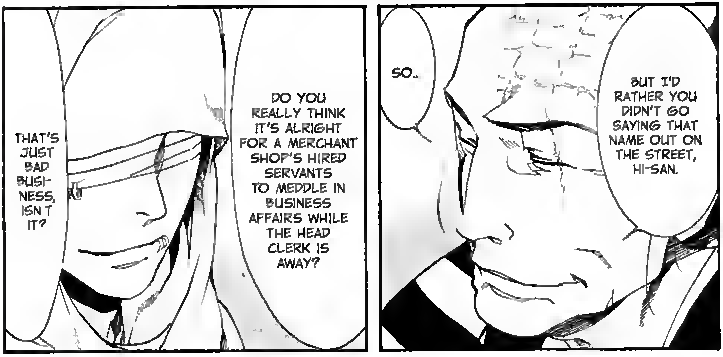
I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU ALL THIS TIME, AND WE END UP MEETING LIKE THIS!
SO THERE'S NO NEED TO HOLD BACK, HI-SAN.

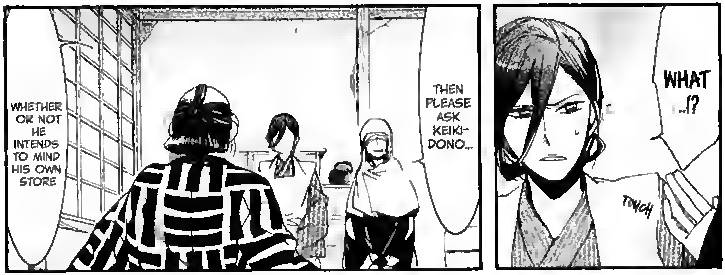

CHATTER
CHATTER

THAT'S NO GOOD.
YOU ALREADY HAVE SOMEONE ELSE IN MIND, DON'T YOU?
WHAT!?
BUT, TATSU-GOROU-DONO,
OH~
HO~
HO~
SFX: FUME
YOU'RE RIGHT.
THE PERSON I'M LOOKING FOR IS STAYING HERE AT THE NAGAYA... HE'S A VERY STRANGE MAN.
...LATELY YOU'VE BEEN TURNING UP IN SOME VERY SKETCHY PLACES, SO I FIGURE YOU'VE HEARD OF HIM
WHAT'S YOUR LITTLE "SHADOW ORGANIZATION" UP TO NOW? I'D LOVE TO KNOW
DO YOU KNOW HIM?
"TOKI," I BELIEVE HE'S CALLED.



T/N: KEIKI IS YOSHINOBU'S INFORMAL NAME.

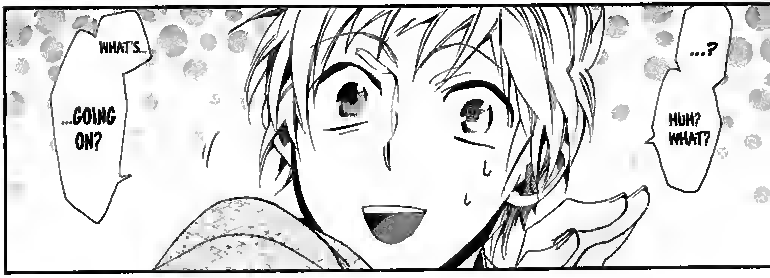

DO YOU REALLY THINK IT'S ALRIGHT FOR A MERCHANT SHOP'S HIRED SERVANTS TO MEDDLE IN BUSINESS AFFAIRS WHILE THE HEAD CLERK IS AWAY?
THAT'S JUST BAD BUSINESS, ISN'T IT?
SO..
BUT I'D RATHER YOU DIDN'T GO SAYING THAT NAME OUT ON THE STREET, HI-SAN.



TWITCH
IF THE SHOP IS ABOUT TO GO OUT OF BUSINESS, THEN PERHAPS OUR INTERFERENCE MAY BE NEEDED
...WOW, IT REALLY SEEMS LIKE THEY'RE GOING OUT OF THEIR WAY TO HIDE SOMETHING
AND THE ATMOSPHERE IS REALLY TENSE DON'T YOU THINK?
YEAH...
WELL...
I GUESS ALL WE CAN DO IS WATCH...
I'M GLAD HE'S NOT HERE...
I DON'T REALLY GET IT, BUT... IT SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT TOKI
SFX. NOD, NOD
SFX. SLAM
I'M HERE!!
What did I miss?

WHAT..
THE..
TOKI!?
HUH?

HM?
EHA HAHAH
OHO~


WHAT'S..
...GOING ON?
...?
HUH? WHAT?

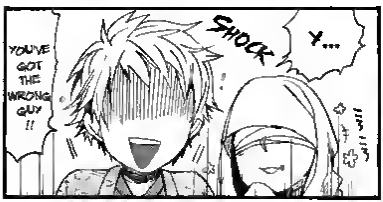
CHAPTER 70 : BLACK SMOKE FROM THE BURNING FIELDS

SFX: SIGH
HEY!
IF YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT ME, JUST SAY IT, OKAY?
WHY IS HE HERE?
Smmgh
!
HAHA, ACTUALLY, WE WERE TALKING ABOUT YOU

And what does he mean by "knife"?
Iemochi... who's that?
HUH?
Huh?

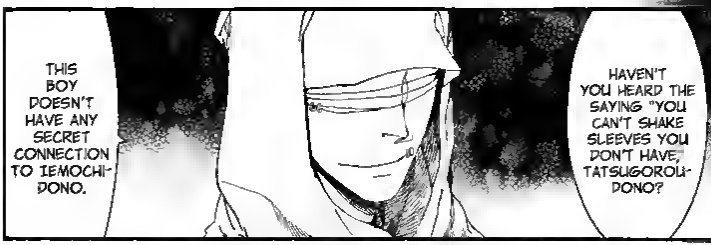
WHISPER WHISPER
WHISPER WHISPER

"IEMOCHI" = "THE SHOUGUN."
"FAVORITE KNIFE" = "A MOST TRUSTED RETAINER, A RIGHT-HAND MAN."
Whoa!

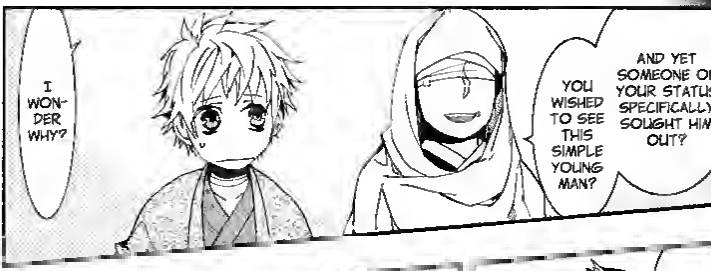

SHOCK
Y...
YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG GUY!!

I'M SHINMON TATSUGOROU, ALL-AROUND DIRTY BASTARD.
SO WE CAN SKIP THE PLEASANTRIES, I THINK.
AND YOU, BOY...
YOU'RE TOKI, RIGHT? IEMOCHI'S "FAVORITE KNIFE"?

HAHA, AT THIS POINT IN THE GAME, WE SHOULDN'T HOLD ANYTHING BACK
LET'S START BY EXCHANGING A LITTLE INFORMATION
WE CAN SPEAK FRANKLY HERE

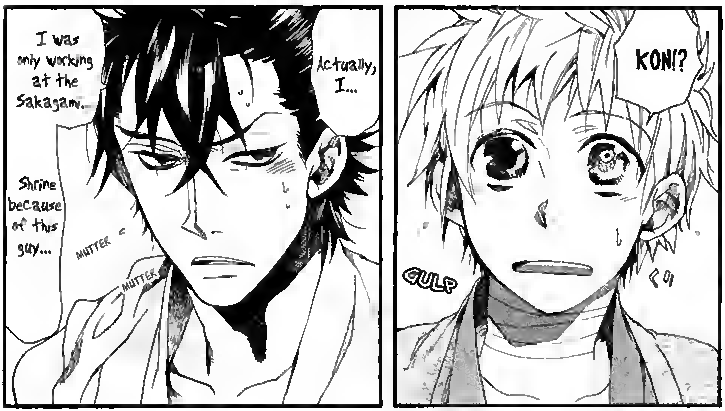

HAVEN'T YOU HEARD THE SAYING "YOU CAN'T SHAKE SLEEVES YOU DON'T HAVE, TATSUGOROU-DONO?
THIS BOY DOESN'T HAVE ANY SECRET CONNECTION TO IEMOCHI-DONO.

T/N: AN EXPRESSION MEANING THAT YOU CAN'T GIVE SOMETHING THAT YOU DON'T HAVE.



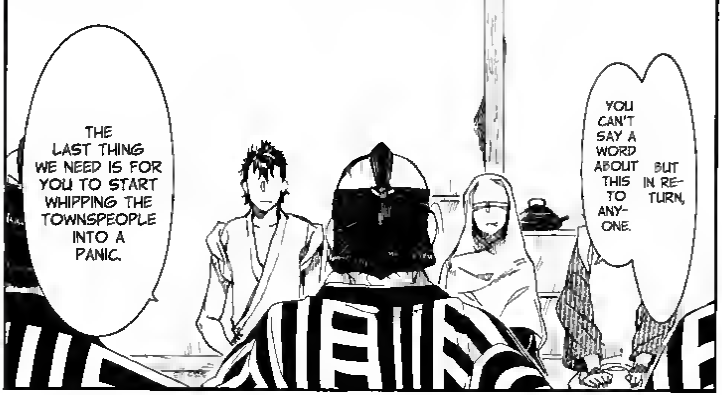
I'M SORRY, BOYS, BUT THIS IS A PRIVATE CONVER-SATION.
I'M GOING TO HAVE TO ASK THAT UNINVOLVED PERSONS LEAVE THE ROOM.
UH.
OK.
Y...
YES, SIR.
FLINCH
SHUFFLE
WHY ARE THEY KICKING US OUT? THIS STINKS.
SHUFFLE
!
SHUFFLE

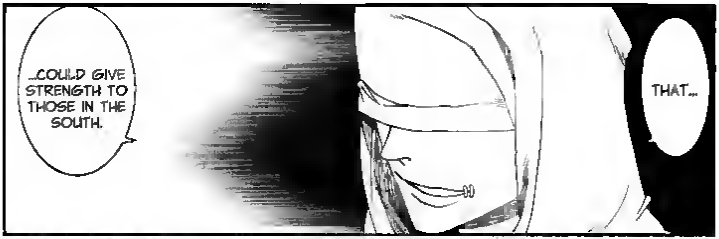
HEY...
WHAT IF...
I'M INVOLV-ED?
WHAT THEN?


I was only working at the Sakagami Shrine because of this guy...
MUTTER
MUTTER
Actually, I...
KON!?
GULP

KELLET
Y...
YEAH.
OH, YOU'RE FROM THE SAKAGAMI SHRINE? IN THAT CASE, I SUPPOSE YOU CAN STAY AND LISTEN. IS THAT WHAT YOU WISH TO DO?
...KON?
.....
THEN I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO ISN'T INVOLVED!?
SHOCK
WH...
WHAT THE HELL!?

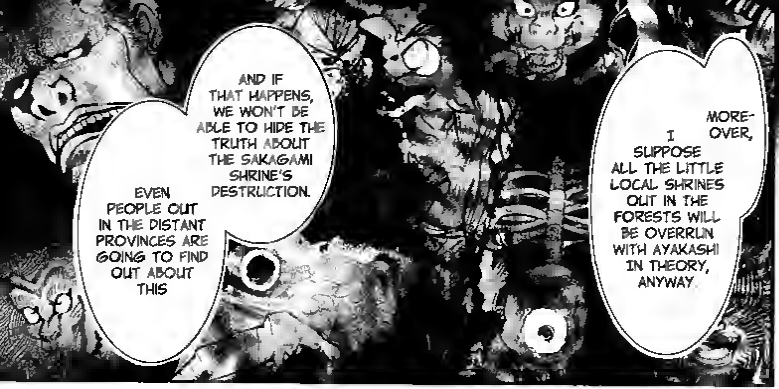
AND IT'S MY JOB TO LOOK OUT FOR THEM AND SHOW THEM AROUND TOWN!!
BUT... BUT! I'M THEIR FRIEND!!
HE-HACHI-SAN!?
H...
SO IF YOU WANT TO EXCLUDE ME FROM YOUR LITTLE CHAT THEN YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO FIND A NEW PLACE TO MEET!
AND YOU'RE HAVING YOUR MEETING HERE IN THE NAGA-YA! I'M A FRIEND OF THE OWNER. YOU KNOW!!?
SFX: GLARE SLAM
OH WELL, YOU'VE LEFT ME NO CHOICE! I'LL JUST HAVE TO LET YOU STAY
HAHAHA, BUT THIS IS NO GOOD.
EH!?
OH, WELL, IT WOULDN'T BE THAT HARD TO FIND A NEW LOCATION, REALLY
SFX: GASP

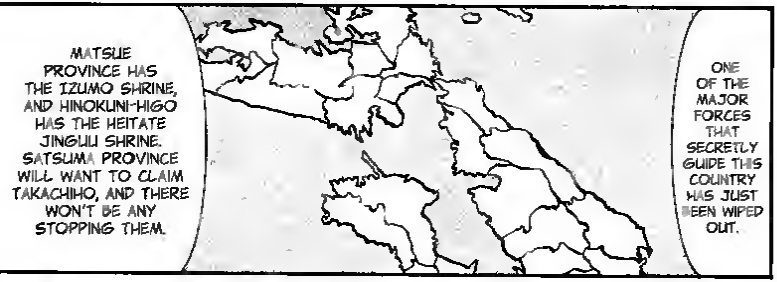

THE LAST THING WE NEED IS FOR YOU TO START WHIPPING THE TOWNSPEOPLE INTO A PANIC.
YOU CAN'T SAY A WORD ABOUT THIS TO ANY-ONE.
BUT IN RE-TURN,



T/N: BY "SOUTH," SHE MEANS THE SOUTH OF JAPAN, AROUND MODERN-DAY KYUUSHUU. DURING AMATSUKI'S TIME PERIOD, THE SAMURAI CLANS IN SOUTHERN JAPAN WERE SEEKING TO OVERTHROW THE SHOUGUN'S GOVERNMENT IN EDO (MODERN-DAY TOKYO) AND REINSTATE THE EMPEROR AS THE SUPREME RULER.

Geez
FOR SOME REASON, THAT SOUNDS SURTA FAMILIAR..
THE IMPERIAL COURT -?
THAT'S WHERE THE EMPEROR IS, YOU DUMBASS
THE EMPEROR SUPPOSEDLY OUTRANKS THE SHOUGUN, BUT IN REALITY, HE'S JUST A FIGUREHEAD..
SO THERE'S A LOT OF DEEP TENSION BE TWEEN THE TWO SIDES
WHISPER
WHISPER
SO EVEN IF IT'S JUST ON THE SURFACE, THE BALANCE OF POWER HAS TO BE MAINTAINED..
UNTIL NOW, THE IMPERIAL COURT HAS EXERCISED THEIR POWER..
THROUGH THE INFLUENCE OF THE SAKAGAMI SHRINE
SO THEY'VE LITERALLY LOST THEIR VOICE
IT WON'T TAKE LONG FOR NEWS OF THE SHRINE'S DESTRUCTION TO SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY
AND NOW THE LINK BETWEEN THE SHOUGUN'S GOVERNMENT AND THE IMPERIAL COURT HAS BEEN BROKEN.


EVEN PEOPLE OUT IN THE DISTANT PROVINCES ARE GOING TO FIND OUT ABOUT THIS
AND IF THAT HAPPENS, WE WON'T BE ABLE TO HIDE THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SAKAGAMI SHRINE'S DESTRUCTION.
MORE-OVER, I SUPPOSE ALL THE LITTLE LOCAL SHRINES OUT IN THE FORESTS WILL BE OVERRUN WITH AYAKASHI IN THEORY, ANYWAY.


MATSUE PROVINCE HAS THE IZUMO SHRINE, AND HINOKUNI-HIGO HAS THE HEITATE JINGUU SHRINE. SATSUMA PROVINCE WILL WANT TO CLAIM TAKACHIHO, AND THERE WON'T BE ANY STOPPING THEM.
ONE OF THE MAJOR FORCES THAT SECRETLY GUIDE THIS COUNTRY HAS JUST BEEN WIPED OUT.

THEIR GREATEST DESIRE—?
A CHANCE TO ACHIEVE THEIR GREATEST DESIRE
THEY'LL SEE THIS AS A CHANCE TO SEIZE THEIR BIRTHRIGHT...

REVO-
LUTION

I CAN'T ALLOW KEIKI-SAN TO BE HARMED
BUT NEITHER THE ONMYOURYOU NOR IEMOCHI'S BOY WILL TAKE ACTION
IF THE TRUTH GETS OUT, WE'LL DRAW CLOSER TO WAR.
BUT I HAVE A PLAN TO USE YOU ALL.
THE EMBERS OF DISSENT STILL BURN IN THIS COUNTRY. HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO PUT THEM OUT?
HO HO
!?
OH HO HO HO

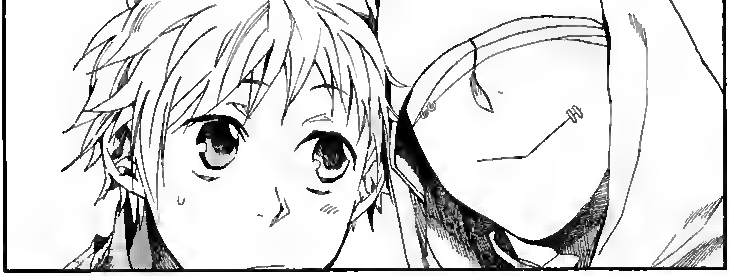
SO ALL THIS NONSENSE ABOUT DEMONS AND GODS IS JUST A NUISANCE... IS THAT WHAT YOU'D LIKE TO BELIEVE?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE BETTER THAN THAT.
MY, MY, IT SOUNDS LIKE WE'RE BEING SET UP!
SFX. SILENCE
YOU MIGHT DISMISS WHAT I SAY AS THE SCOLDING OF AN OLD HAG, BUT YOU'D DO WELL TO LISTEN.
BUT I UNDER-STAND PER-FECTLY THE WORDS OF A MAN WHO DOESN'T TRUST ME
THOSE WHO DON'T TRULY BELIEVE IN THE SUPERNATURAL SIMPLY CAN'T COMPREHEND ITS DANGERS

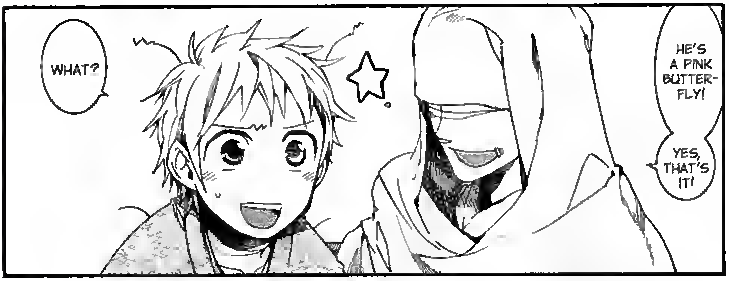
SO DON'T MESS WITH US.
WE WON'T LET YOU MESS WITH HIM, EITHER

TELL ME...
JUST WHAT IS THIS BOY?

BOTH YOU AND THAT IEMOCHI ARE WILLING TO ACT ON HIS BEHALF.
ISN'T HE JUST SOME LOCAL BRAT?

AS LONG AS SASAKI-SAN IS IN CHARGE,
THE ONMYOURYOU WILL CONTINUE TO EXIST FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOVERNMENT
AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO WORK FOR THE SAKE OF THE ONMYOURYOU.
REGARDLESS OF WHO RULES AS SHOUGUN.




WHAT?
HE'S A PINK BUTTER-FLY!
YES, THAT'S IT!

BUT THAT BREEZE SENDS RIPPLES ACROSS THE SURFACE OF THE WATER AND SHAKES THE ENTIRE WORLD
HE'S A MESSEN-GER FROM WHEN HEAVEN. HE FLAPS HIS WINGS, IT CREATES THE TINIEST BREEZE...

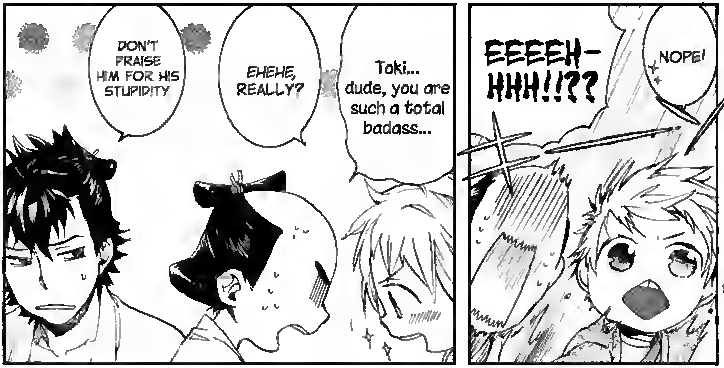
...HM.
SO WE MUST TREAS-URE HIM.

BUT A BUTTER-FLY IS WEAK
IF IT'S MISTREATED, IT COULD EASILY DIE.

I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN.
SO I'LL JUST CONSIDER YOUR STORY A SOUVENIR TO REMEMBER THIS MEETING BY
YEAH
SHIFT
WELL, I NEVER WENT TO SCHOOL, SO THAT FANCY TALK GOES RIGHT OVER MY HEAD.
OH, JUST ONE MORE THING
HEY...
STARE
LET'S MEET THERE NEXT TIME
MY FAVORITE TEAHOUSE HAS THE BEST DANGO.
HII-SAN,

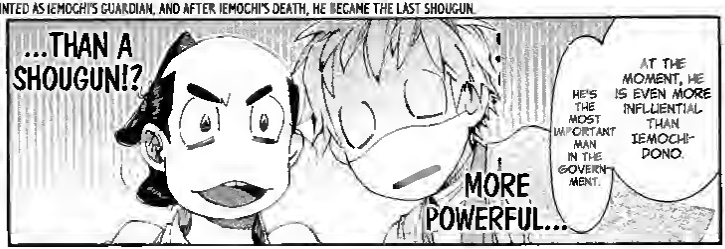
AHH HHH
WELL, WE SUR-VIVED I THINK
!!!
!!!
KYAAAA

OH, RIKUGOU-DONO, YOU DON'T KNOW TATSUG-OROU?
BUT SERIOUSLY, WHAT WAS UP WITH THAT GUY?!


DON'T PRAISE HIM FOR HIS STUPIDITY
EHEHE, REALLY?
Toki... dude, you are such a total badass...
EEEEH-HHH!!??
NOPE!

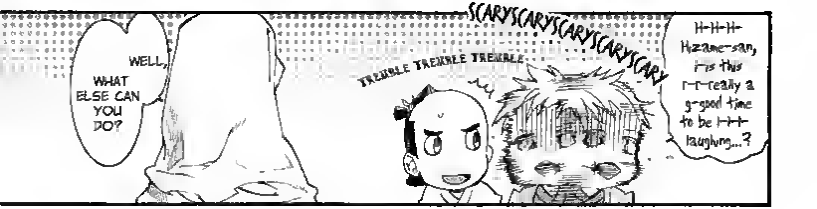
TATSU-GORO IS THE #1 GANGSTER IN EDO!
WHAT!? YOU MEAN HE'S YAKUZA ...!?
SHIVER
OH HO HO
OH MY-
HE'S A CHARMING, CHIVALROUS MAN WHO PROTECTS THE WEAK.
IN HIS MIND, HE'S NOTHING SO SCARY AS THAT.
IT'S THE MAN BEHIND HIM THAT YOU HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT
OH, YEAH.
HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT A KEIKI ...?
"KEIKI" IS THE NAME HE USES AMONG THOSE CLOSE TO HIM, BUT HIS GIVEN NAME IS YOSHINOBU.
YES, "KEI" AS IN "KEIJI" ("AUSPICIOUS EVENT") AND "KI" AS IN "KANKI" ("GREAT JOY"). HE CARRIES QUITE A BURDEN OF HAPPINESS, DOESN'T HE?
HITO-TSUBASHI YOSHI-NOBU.

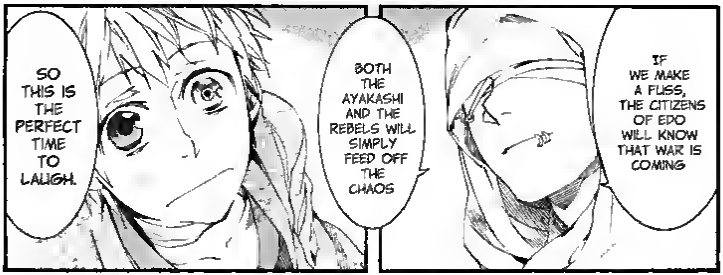
T/N: "HITOTSUBASHI" IS ONE OF THE FAMILY NAMES UNDER THE TOKUGAWA CLAN. YOSHINOBU WAS APPOINTED AS IEMOCHI'S GUARDIAN, AND AFTER IEMOCHI'S DEATH, HE BECAME THE LAST SHOUGUN.


...THAN A SHOUGUN!?
MORE POWERFUL...
HE'S THE MOST IMPORTANT MAN IN THE GOVERNMENT.
AT THE MOMENT, HE IS EVEN MORE INFLUENTIAL THAN IEMOCHI-DONO.

IT'S NO USE! I NEVER EVEN WENT TO SCHOOL! I'M NO GOOD AT THIS
NOOO! WAA HEIHACHIAH!!! -SAN, DON'T LEAVE ME!!
We can be stupid together!
MY BRAIN CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE! TOKI, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN!
SFX. SHAKE, SCARED
SFX. SHAKE
THERE'S GOING TO BE FIGHTING IN EDO, RIGHT?
THESE ANTI-SHOUGUNATE FORCES AND THE EMPEROR ARE ON ONE SIDE, AND THE GOVERNMENT AND US ARE ON THE OTHER. SO THE POINT IS...
HMM
ANYWAY. .

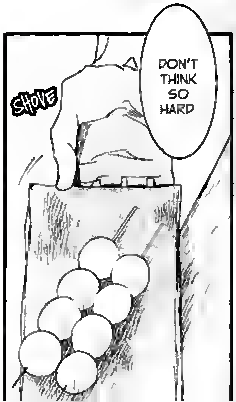
ON ONE HAND WE HAVE THE PRO-SHOUGUNATE AND ANTI-SHOUGUNATE FORCES SCATTERING THEIR SPARKS
AND EVEN WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT, THE SUPPORTERS OF YOSHINORU-DONO AND IEMOCHI-DONO ARE AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER. IT'S A POTENTIALLY VOLATILE SITUATION
OH HO HO
AND ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE THE AYAKASHI AND THE YAKOU ALLIED AGAINST HUMANITY. AND HEAVEN'S SEAT AND THE ONMYOURYOU UNITED UNDER RIKUGOU-DONO
IT'S A VOLATILE SITUATION ON THIS SIDE, TOO..
WHAT A MESS! LOOKS LIKE BOTH OF OUR HANDS ARE FULL

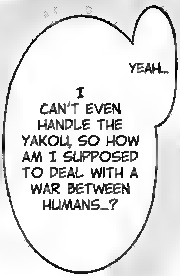

SCARYSCARYSCARYSCARYSCARY
TREMBLE TREMBLE TREMBLE
H-H-H-Hazame-san, is this r-r-really a g-good time to be h-h-h- laughing...?
WELL, WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?


IF WE MAKE A FUSS, THE CITIZENS OF EDO WILL KNOW THAT WAR IS COMING
BOTH THE AYAKASHI AND THE REBELS WILL SIMPLY FEED OFF THE CHAOS
SO THIS IS THE PERFECT TIME TO LAUGH.

MOST PEOPLE SIMPLY CAN'T BELIEVE THE EXISTENCE OF THE SPIRIT WORLD, AND NOTHING YOU SAY CAN CHANGE THEIR MINDS.
DON'T LET HIM USE YOU, RIKUGOU-DONO
AND NEXT TIME, YOU MAY BE ON YOUR OWN.
YOU'LL MEET TATSUGOROU AGAIN.

EVEN NOW, I KNOW HOW THEY FEEL
AND THERE ARE A WHOLE LOT OF PEOPLE LIKE THAT IN THE WORLD
PEOPLE WHO CAN'T SEE AYAKASHI PROBABLY AREN'T GOING TO BELIEVE IN THEM



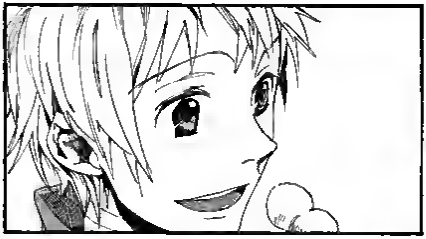


SO THE SAKAGAMI SHRINE AND THE ONMYOURYOU ARE JUST POLITICS TO MOST PEOPLE.

KON!
YOU WERE TALKING TO YOURSELF
DON'T JUST LET STUFF LIKE THAT SLIP!

I GUESS IT'S A GOOD THING YOU ALREADY KNOW,
HM HM
RIGHT?

OH, RIGHT



I'M SUCH AN IDIOT, I SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE ONE STANDING OUTSIDE!
Thanks for the dango!

HUH?
WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU SLEPT?

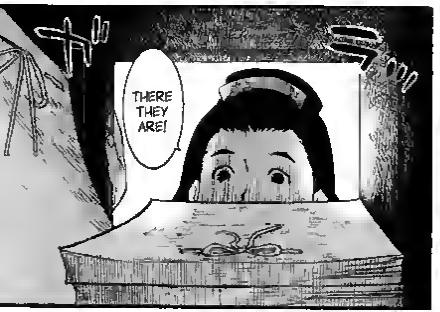
DID YOU THINK YOU COULD HIDE THAT FROM ME?
YOU PRETEND YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON, BUT I KNOW YOU YOU HAVEN'T BEEN SLEEPING

I-IS IT REALLY THAT OBVIOUS..?
QUIT SMILING WHEN YOU DON'T WANT TO.

MAN, TSUYU-KUSA IS AN AYAKASHI WHO DOESN'T REALLY NEED TO SLEEP ANYWAY, SO HE DIDN'T PICK UP ON IT...
!
WAH!
IT BOTHERS ME.
WHEN YOU FAKE A SMILE,
It's kinda creepy.
TOKI?
AHH, IT'S TOTALLY UNCOOL TO HAVE YOUR SECRET EXPOSED!
I...

I'M AFRAID TO SLEEP.
WHAT IF EVERYTHING CHANGES AGAIN WHEN I WAKE UP?
I MEAN, YEAH, THERE ARE SOME PROBLEMS THAT I WISH WOULD GO AWAY...
WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES,
I'M AFRAID THAT EVERYTHING IS GOING TO DISAPPEAR.
WHAT IF... I LOSE EVERYONE AGAIN?
I'M AFRAID OF WHAT I CAN'T SEE...
I'M SUPPOSED TO FIX EVERY-THING, BUT... I KNOW THINGS WON'T TURN OUT THE WAY I WANT THEM TO.

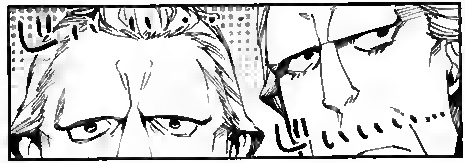
SFX: SLIDE



SFX: OPEN

SFX: FWOOSH
KYAAAAAAAA

CHAPTER 71: TREADING THE WHEAT / "RED"
SFX: CHATER X 3



SFX. CHATTER

SFX WHISPER X2

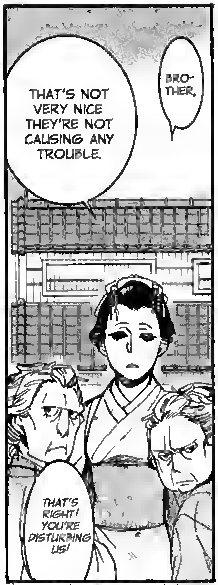
OH,
HE'S A FRIEND OF MY BROTHER. HE BROUGHT HIM HERE FOR SOME SORT OF BUSINESS, I BELIEVE...
BENI-SAN, WHO IS THAT...?
!? A FOREIGNER!?
AREN'T THEY DANGEROUS? JUST HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW HIM?

SFX WHISPER

SFX. TWITCH

SFX. SPARKLE

SFX. CRUSH



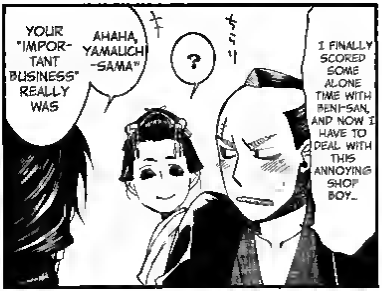
IT'S ALWAYS AWFULLY NOISY WHEN YOU LADIES STOP BY.
そお
THIS IS A SHOP WINDOW, NOT A PLACE TO SIT AND CHAT!
THAT'S TRUE...
LADIES, DON'T ACT LIKE CLINGING VINES SHOW A LITTLE RESTRAINT
ざわ
SFX. TWIRL

T/N: SHE SAYS THEY'RE LIKE "LANTERNS AT NOON IN HATCHOUBORI." AN EXPRESSION MEANING THAT SOMEONE DOESN'T STICK OUT, OR ISN'T VERY MEMORABLE

SHUT UP YOU BASTARD IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT DON'T EAT IT!
YOU SHOULD HAVE JUST SAID FROM THE STARTTHAT YOUR "IMPORTANT BUSINESS" WAS JUST EATING DANGO!
HEY, NO KILLING, PLEASE
THREE ORDERS OF DANGO, HERE YOU GO!
SFX: PUSH

SFX: GRIN
SFX: CHOMP CHOMP
I DIDN'T BRING THEM HERE TO PLAY!!
ISN'T IT BETTER TO KEEP THEM WHERE WE CAN SEE THEM?
MORE IMPORTANTLY WHY ARE THOSE TWO IDIOTS HERE?!

Y...
YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG IDIOT!
N...
NO IT WASN'T!
SFX: SCREAM


YOUR "IMPORTANT BUSINESS" REALLY WAS
AHAHA, YAMAUCHI-SAMA"
?
I FINALLY SCORED SOME ALONE TIME WITH BENI-SAN, AND NOW I HAVE TO DEAL WITH THIS ANNOYING SHOP BOY...
SFX: GLANCE

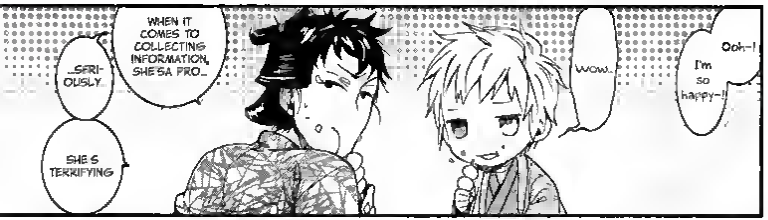
I CAME BECAUSE I HEARD ABOUT ALL THE STRANGE DEATHS IN THIS AREA!
IN JUST THE PAST TEN DAYS, THERE HAVE BEEN THREE INCIDENTS IN MY PRECINCT ALONE.
AND IF YOU ADD IN REPORTS FROM NEARBY PRECINCTS, THERE HAVE BEEN AT LEAST TWENTY SUSPICIOUS DEATHS.
THE CORPSES HAVE BEEN FOUND DECAPITATED OR WITH GAPING HOLES IN THEIR BODIES...
THESE CAN'T BE NATURAL DEATHS...
AND IT'S NOT ONLY MURDERS... REPORTS OF DISAPPEARANCES HAVE BEEN COMING IN AS WELL.
COUGH
ゴホン
IT'S NOT AS IF I HAD ULTERIOR MOTIVES!
FEW OTHERS AMONG THE SAMURAI CLASS HAVE TAKEN NOTICE...
BUT THIS IS A MATTER OF HONOR.
IT AFFECTS BOTH SAMURAI AND COMMONERS.
WHATEVER IS DOING THIS WON'T MAKE ANY DISTINCTION IN ITS VICTIMS.
IN ALL LIKELIHOOD WE HERE, IN EDO, HAVE A SERIAL KILLER ON OUR HANDS.
AND WE CAN'T EVEN GRASP THIS BEAST BY THE TAIL!
THERE IS A VILLAIN HIDING IN OUR MIDST!

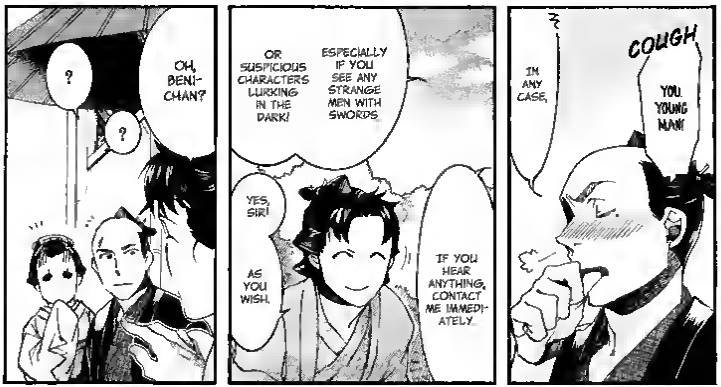
IF YOU KNOW ANYTHING AT ALL, DO TELL ME!
SO PLEASE, YOUNG MAN,
WOW.
SCARY, SCARY.
IS THIS THE WORK OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT REBELS?
OR IS SOMEONE WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT PULLING THE STRINGS?
EITHER WAY, IT'S ALL UNPRODUCTIVE SPECULATION.
I KNOW YOU KEEP STRANGE COMPANY AND YOU ALWAYS HAVE AN EAR OUT FOR RUMORS.
ISN'T INVESTIGATING THIS SORT OF THING A JOB FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS?
...WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME?
OH WOOOOOW I HATE TO DISAPPOINT, BUT I THINK YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG GUY~!
YOU CAN FIND OUT THINGS THAT I CAN'T
I KNOW YOU KEEP STRANGE COMPANY AND YOU ALWAYS HAVE AN EAR OUT FOR RUMORS
DOES HE mean...?

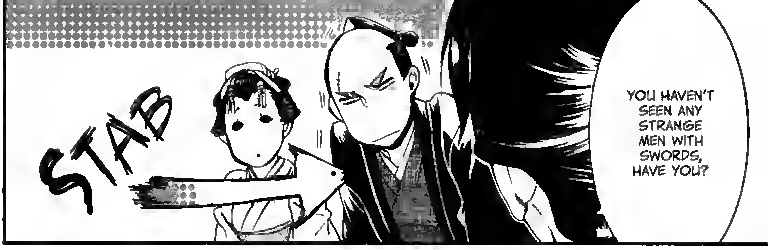
HMM...
BUT I HAVE HEARD A FEW RUMORS
IT SEEMS THAT ALL THE KILLINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES HAPPENED WHEN PEOPLE WERE ALONE AND IN DARK PLACES, LIKE ALLEYWAYS OR STOREHOUSES,
AND THE VICTIMS WERE MOSTLY PEOPLE ON THE FRINGES OF SOCIETY
I SEE...
YES, THAT MAKES SENSE...
!
CHILDREN DRAGGED INTO ALLEYS BY THEIR ANKLES NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN...
BLOOD-SOAKED CORPSES FOUND DISMEMBERED IN DARK STORE HOUSES...
AND NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN THE PERPETRATOR...
EVEN THOSE WHO SURVIVE THEIR INJU-RIES...
ARE DRIVEN MAD, OR SIMPLY NEVER [illegible]
THAT'S WHAT I'VE HEARD, IN ANY CASE...
SFX SHOCK
!
WHAT A FRIGHTEN-ING STORY
!!
AH... I...
I'M SO SORRY!
I NEVER SHOULD HAVE SPOKEN OF SUCH THINGS IN THE PRESENCE OF A LADY!
Oh?

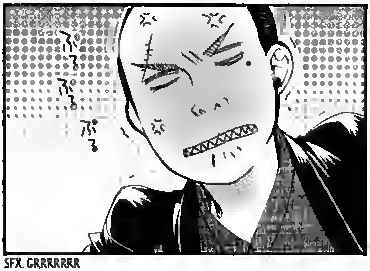
Smile
I RATHER ENJOY HEARING YOUR SCARY STORIES, YAMAUCHI -SAMA!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT.
R-REALLY...?
I-IF YOU LIKE MY STORIES SO MUCH, I'LL TELL YOU AS MANY AS YOU WANT...!
TREMBLE
OH, YAMA-UCHI-SAMA! PLEASE, TELL ME ALL ABOUT YOUR CASES IN GRAPHIC DETAIL~!
OF COURSE!
I'LL KEEP YOU UPDATED!

SFX: THUMP

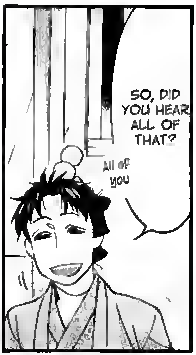

WHEN IT COMES TO COLLECTING INFORMATION, SHE'S A PRO...
...SERI-OUSLY.
SHE'S TERRIFYING
WOW...
OOH~!
I'M SO HAPPY~!!


OH, BENI-CHAN?
?
?
OR SUSPICIOUS CHARACTERS LURKING IN THE DARK!
ESPECIALLY IF YOU SEE ANY STRANGE MEN WITH SWORDS.
YES, SIR!
AS YOU WISH.
IF YOU HEAR ANYTHING, CONTACT ME IMMEDI-ATELY.
IN ANY CASE,
COUGH
YOU YOUNG MAN!

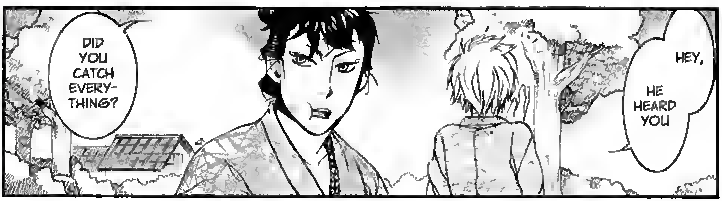

STAB
YOU HAVEN'T SEEN ANY STRANGE MEN WITH SWORDS, HAVE YOU?


SFX. GRRRRRR

YAMAUCHI-SAMA, YOU'RE TEN YEARS TOO EARLY TO BE FLIRTING WITH BENI-CHAN.
SFX. GRIN

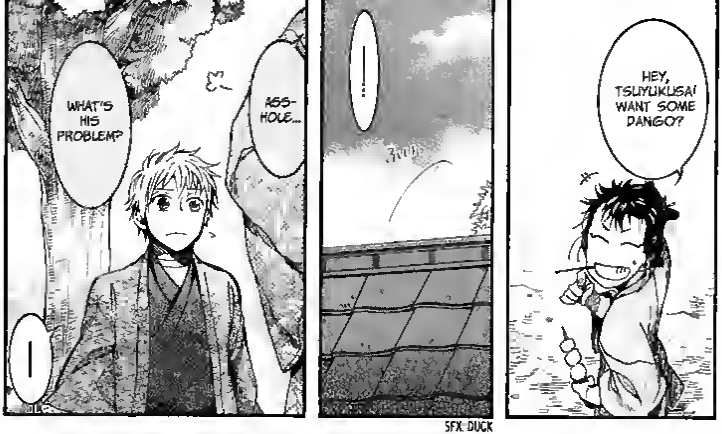

SO, DID YOU HEAR ALL OF THAT?
All of you

YOU FOOL!


DID YOU CATCH EVERY-THING?
HEY, HE HEARD YOU

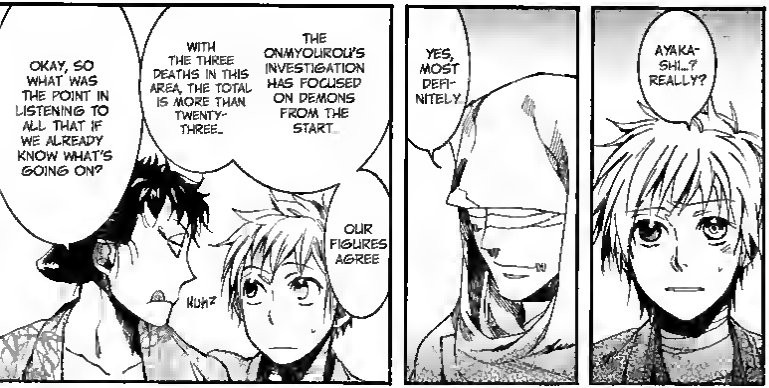
AREN'T YOU GOING TO COME DOWN?
IT'S HARD TO TALK LIKE THIS
YEAH.
SFX: RUSTLE
IT'S FINE
I'LL STAY RIGHT HERE.
HUH?
WHY?
RIKU GOU-DONO, LET HIM BE.
PERHAPS IT'S ALREADY A LITTLE BIT CROWDED DOWN HERE.
IT'S BETTER THAT HE STAYS WHERE HE IS.

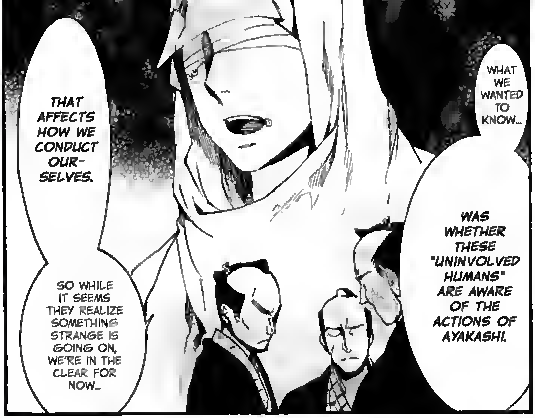
HIZAME-SAN...
YOU MUST BE PATIENT
DIDN'T I TELL YOU?
RIGHT?
SFX: GLANCE
It's that suitcase
I GUESS SO
SFX: HMPH


WHAT'S HIS PROBLEM?
ASS-HOLE...
!
HEY, TSUYUKUSA! WANT SOME DANGO?

SFX: DUCK

THOSE MURDERS WERE ALMOST CERTAINLY COMMITTED BY AYAKASHI.
Well then, I'M SURE YOU ALL HAD THE SAME THOUGHT.

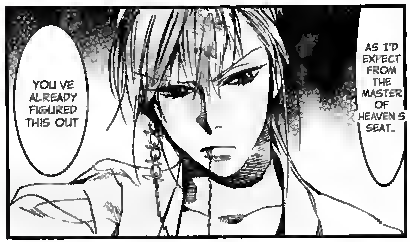

OKAY, SO WHAT WAS THE POINT IN LISTENING TO ALL THAT IF WE ALREADY KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON?
WITH THE THREE DEATHS IN THIS AREA, THE TOTAL IS MORE THAN TWENTY-THREE...
THE ONMYOURYOU'S INVESTIGATION HAS FOCUSED ON DEMONS FROM THE START.
OUR FIGURES AGREE
Kuhz
YES, MOST DEFINITELY.
AYAKASHI...? REALLY?


THAT AFFECTS HOW WE CONDUCT OURSELVES.
SO WHILE IT SEEMS THEY REALIZE SOMETHING STRANGE IS GOING ON, WE'RE IN THE CLEAR FOR NOW...
WHAT WE WANTED TO KNOW...
WAS WHETHER THESE "UNINVOLVED HUMANS" ARE AWARE OF THE ACTIONS OF AYAKASHI.

IT WAS A VERY IMPORTANT CONVERSATION
ACTUALLY,
HUH?

HUMAN FOOLISHNESS WILL ONLY EMBOLDEN THE FOOLISHNESS OF THE AYAKASHI.
YOU'RE RIGHT

IT DOESN'T MAKE WHAT'S GOING ON ANY LESS REAL.
SOUNDS LIKE POLITICAL CRAP TO ME.
THINGS ARE JUST GOING TO GET WORSE
HUMANS ARE STUPID


YOU'VE ALREADY FIGURED THIS OUT
AS I'D EXPECT FROM THE MASTER OF HEAVEN'S SEAT.

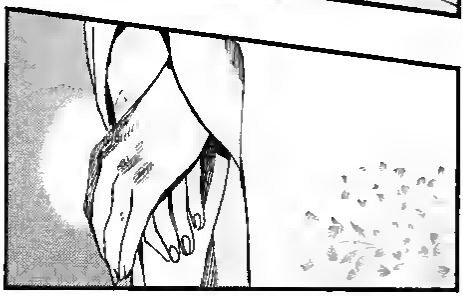
.....

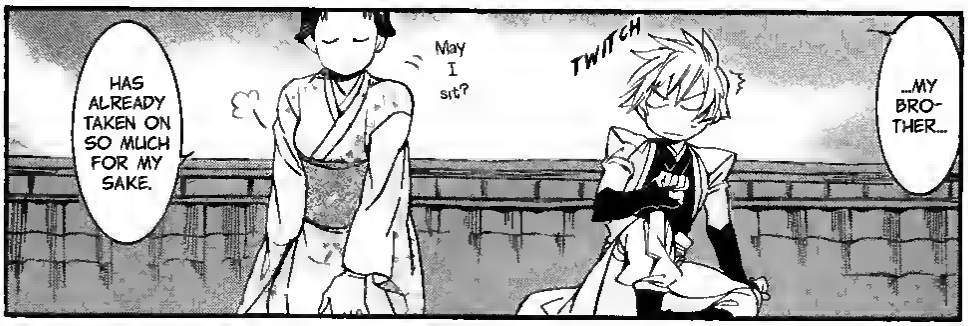
I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU THE SAME THING
HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?
!!
...HEY TOKI
Can we get more dango over here?
Hey!
WHOA, THIS IS SERIOUS!
SFX. FLUTTER
SFX. RUSTLE
YEAH, I KNOW, BUT...
YOU KNOW THIS ISN'T REALLY A DANGO SHOP, RIGHT?
SO DON'T STUFF YOURSELF.
SFX. FLAP

ぽうっ,
FORGIVE ME, RIKUGOU-SAN.
GLARING AT EACH OTHER IS SO UNREFINED.
LET'S STOP THIS.
SFX: PULL

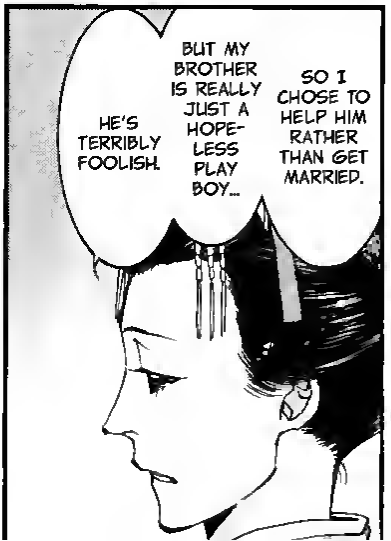
HELLO THERE.
ドキー
TCH
SFX SHOCK
HOW -- DID YOU GET UP HERE?
SFX TREMBLE
EARLIER, YOU WERE THE ONE WHO THREW THAT ROCK, RIGHT?
ACK
?
I... WANTED TO THANK YOU.

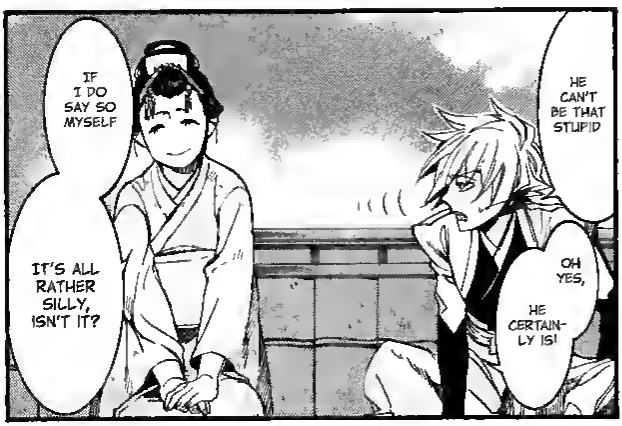
I WAS PERSONALLY GLAD TO BE RID OF THEM.
HOW-EVER,
THAT WAS JUST BECAUSE YOU PEOPLE NEVER LET TOKI GO ANYWHERE...
...YEAH, SO?
THEN I WON'T THANK YOU.
OH?
I KNOW I CAN'T.
BUT AS I AM NOW...
OH, DO FORGIVE ME.
YOU'RE NEVER GONNA GET MARRIED AT THIS RATE.
YOU'RE ONE WEIRD WOMAN.




HAS ALREADY TAKEN ON SO MUCH FOR MY SAKE.
May I sit?
TWITCH
...MY BRO-THER...

HE'S VERY PROTECT-IVE.
SO HE THINKS HE NEEDS TO SHOOT DOWN ANY MARRIAGE PROPOSAL.


HE'S TERRIBLY FOOLISH.
BUT MY BROTHER IS REALLY JUST A HOPE-LESS PLAY BOY...
SO I CHOSE TO HELP HIM RATHER THAN GET MARRIED.


IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF
IT'S ALL RATHER SILLY, ISN'T IT?
HE CAN'T BE THAT STUPID
OH YES, HE CERTAIN-LY IS!

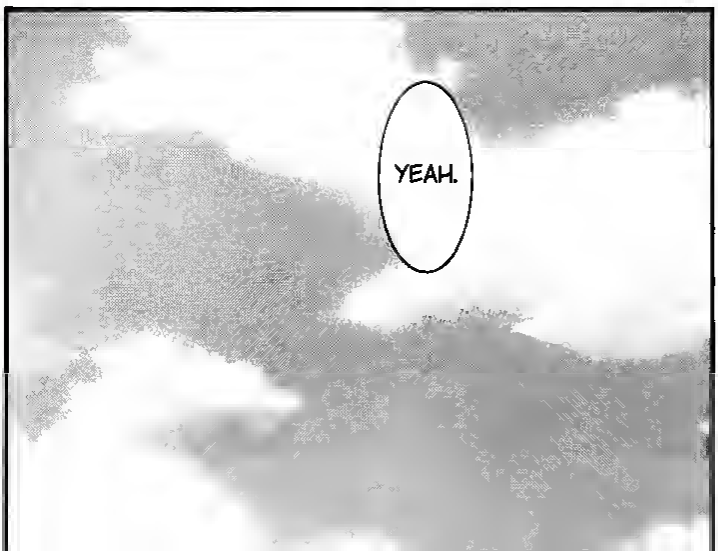
THAT'S BECAUSE...
WHY DON'T I TELL HIM, YOU ASK?

HOW MUCH HE'S DONE FOR ME
HE'D WANT TO PROTECT ME FROM ALL THE BAD THINGS.
HE WOULDN'T WANT ME TO KNOW..

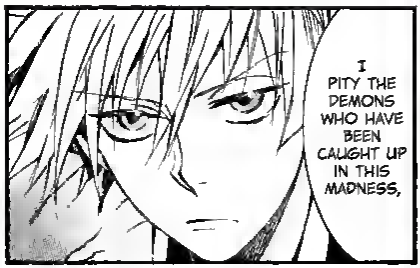
I'VE...
INCURRED TEITEN'S WRATH.
I CAN'T READ HEAVEN'S NET, NOR UNTANGLE ITS THREADS.
I'M BEGGING YOU.
...!
YOU...
...WOULDN'T UNDER-STAND

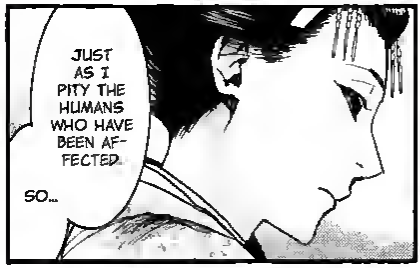
BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE ME HAPPY AT ALL.

YOU UNDER-STAND, DON'T YOU?


YEAH.

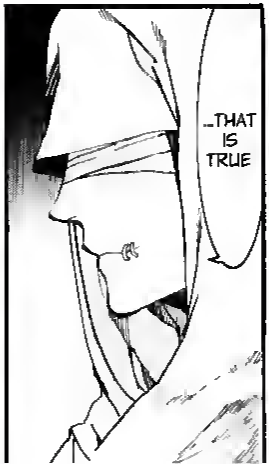
THEN
SAVE US, UNWRITTEN PAGE!
YOU SAVE HUMANS,
BUT YOU WOULD NOT SAVE DEMONS? WHAT A LOT OF THAT FOOP
AND AS THEY DO, THEY BEGIN TO AFFECT THE WORLD AROUND THEM.
THE AYAKASHI THAT APPEARED FROM THE GREAT HOLE GROW STRONGER DAILY.
RIGHT NOW,
THE SITUATION SEEMS TO BE TAKING A TURN FOR THE WORSE.
WHICH IS WHY TATSUGOROU WAS BROUGHT IN.
AND OUR INVESTIGATIONS STIR UP TROUBLE FOR HIS LORDSHIP...
BUT PEOPLE WILL SAY,
"OUR GOOD FRIEND TATSUGOROU IS ON THE CASE!"
AND RUMORS ARE SPREADING THROUGHOUT THE CITY
WITH THE AYAKASHI INDISCRIMINATELY ATTACKING HUMANS, EVEN THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN NOTICE.
BUT IN THE MEANTIME, THE POWER OF THE WILD AYAKASHI GROWS.
WHEREAS IF THEY BELIEVE THAT "SOMETHING TERRIBLE IS HAPPENING IN EDO!", THEIR RESENTMENT TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT WILL GROW AND THERE WILL BE CHAOS.

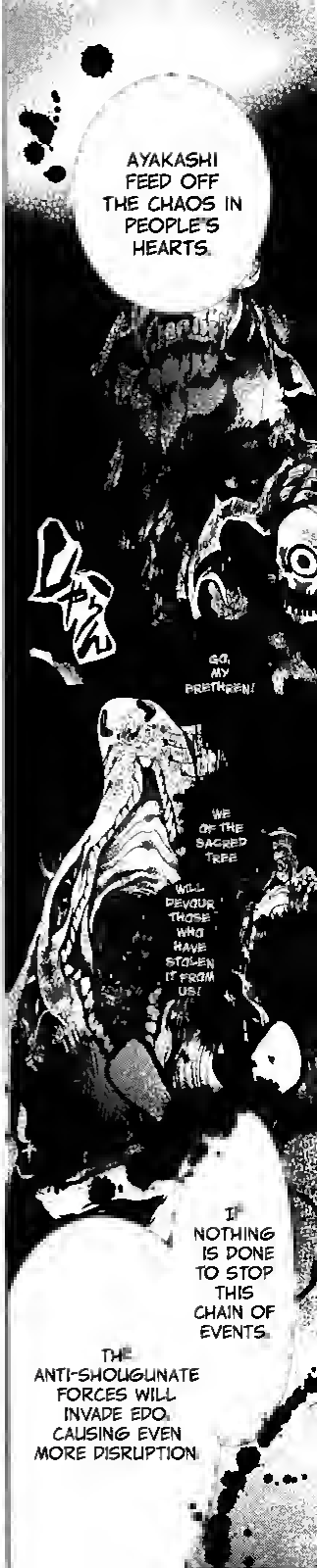

I PITY THE DEMONS WHO HAVE BEEN CAUGHT UP IN THIS MADNESS,


JUST AS I PITY THE HUMANS WHO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED.
SO...

I
I'LL STOP THIS!

THIS ISN'T THE AYAKASHI'S FAULT!
THAT YAKOU BASTARD IS JUST USING US!


...THAT IS TRUE


AYAKASHI FEED OFF THE CHAOS IN PEOPLE'S HEARTS.
GO, MY BRETHREN!
WE OF THE SACRED TREE WILL DEVOUR THOSE WHO HAVE STOLEN IT FROM US!
IF NOTHING IS DONE TO STOP THIS CHAIN OF EVENTS,
THE ANTI-SHOUGUNATE FORCES WILL INVADE EDO, CAUSING EVEN MORE DISRUPTION.

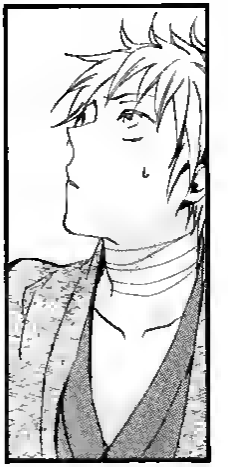
UM...
OH, HOW SO?

SFX: CHOKE

WE JUST NEED TO DEFEAT THE YAKOU AND CONVINCE SHINSHU-CHAN TO SET THINGS RIGHT AGAIN.
WELL, THE CAUSE OF ALL THIS IS OBVIOUS.

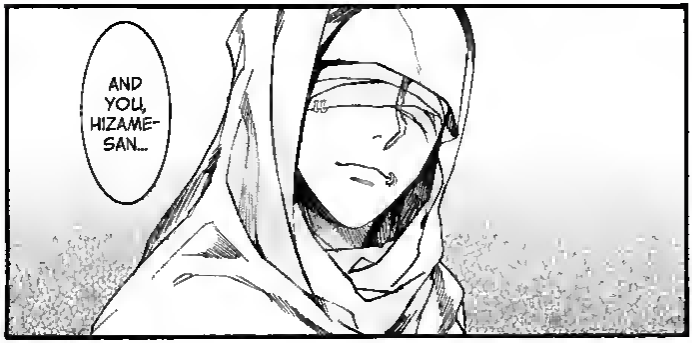
ER...
GULP
AND HOW WILL YOU DO THAT?

BUT AS FOR DEFEATING THE YAKOU... I'M STILL NOT SURE.
FOR PERSUADING SHINSHU-CHAN, I THINK I HAVE AN IDEA. YOU CAN LEAVE THAT PART TO ME.



THAT YOU, BONTEN,

I KNOW...


AND YOU, HIZAME-SAN...

ARE BOTH TRYING TO "USE" ME.
BUT I DON'T THINK I WANT TO BE USED.

HO
HEH.
I'M IMPRESSED.
"LEAVE IT TO ME," HE SAYS.
SOMEBODY HAS BALLS.
OH HO
HO
HO
AH!
I DIDN'T...
MEAN IT LIKE THAT...
I DIDN'T MEAN THAT I DON'T APPRECIATE YOUR HELP...
IT'S JUST... THERE ARE SOME THINGS I WANT TO DO BY MYSELF...
I UNDERSTAND.
YOU'RE RESOLVED TO DO THIS.

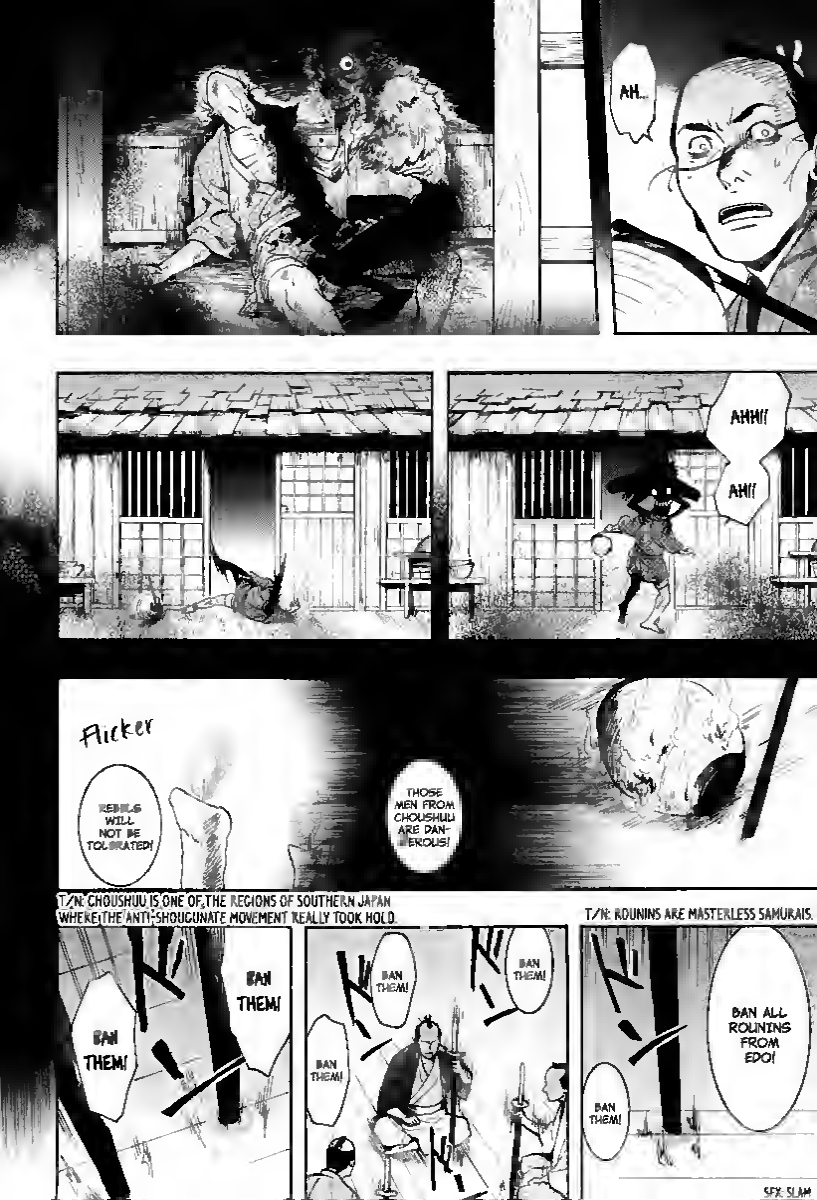
SFX NOD

CHAPTER 72
TREADING THE WHEAT/
"BLUE"
I'm afraid, but please let me pass.
Going in may be fine, but coming back is frightening,
Let me pass...

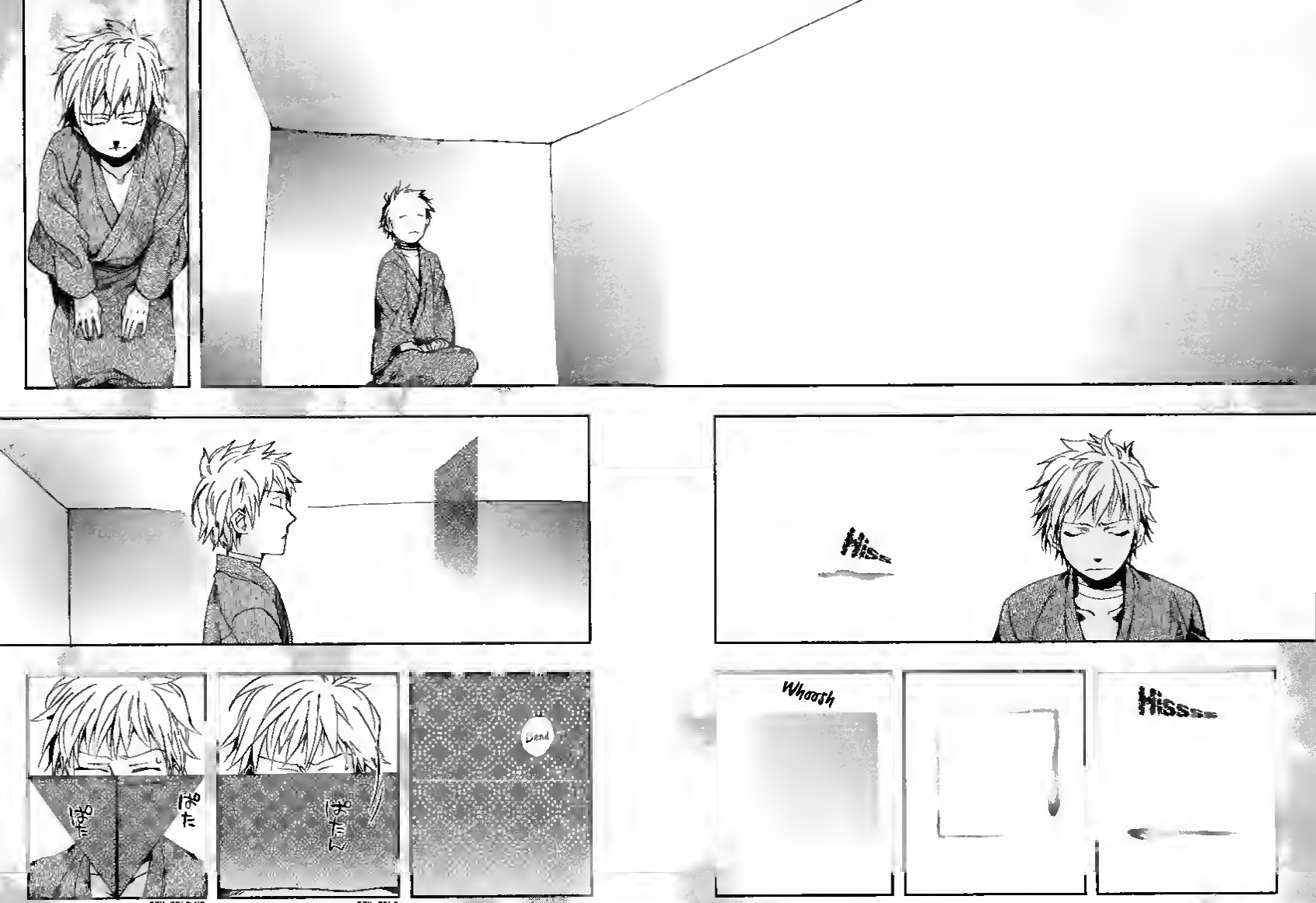
CHAPTER 72
TREADING THE WHEAT / "BLUE"

TREMBLE TREMBLE
TREMBLE TREMBLE
SCARY SCARY
SCARY SCARY

AHHHHHHH!!!
I'M NOT..
DON'T HURT ME!
NO.. PLEASE..
SFX: SPURT
SFX: DRIP X2, DRAG X5
SFX: DRAAAAG
SFX: DRAAAAG
DESTROY THE EMPEROR..
DESTROY THE KOKURI..
DESTROY..
KILL..

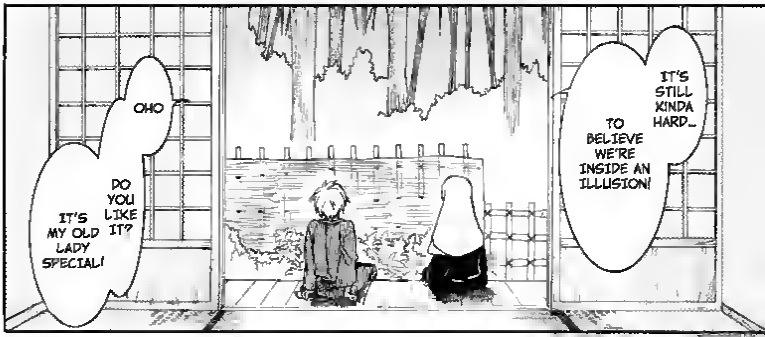

AH...
AHH!!
AH!!
Flicker
REBELS WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!
THOSE MEN FROM CHOUSHUU ARE DANGEROUS!
T/N: CHOUSHUU IS ONE OF THE REGIONS OF SOUTHERN JAPAN WHERE THE ANTI-SHOUGUNATE MOVEMENT REALLY TOOK HOLD.
T/N: ROUNINS ARE MASTERLESS SAMURAIS.
BAN THEM!
BAN THEM!
BAN THEM!
BAN THEM!
BAN THEM!
BAN THEM!
BAN ALL ROUNINS FROM EDO!
SFX: SLAM

わあ
LISTEN UP! THIS GUY HERE IS A PATROL OFFICER FROM DAIKICHIJI!
HEY!
SIR!
WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO?!
NOTHING AT ALL!
WE STILL HAVE NO SUSPECT FOR THE MURDERS AT THE FUTAKANNAYA AND THE NAGAYA!
SFX: CHATTER
わあ
WHO IS SLACKING OFF HERE?!
WHAT?
WE JUST FOUND ANOTHER DEAD "DOZAEMON!"
HEY!!
WE'RE NOT!
WE JUST HEARD NEWS FROM THE BANGOYA! THIS MORNING, THEY FOUND A SEA OF BLOOD!
SFX: CHATTER X2
SFX: SHOUT
DAMN IT!
CALL THE FIRE BRIGADES!!
CHATTER
TCH!
NOT AGAIN!
HEY! LISTEN TO ME! I HEAR THE LOCAL YAKUZA HAVE BEEN RUNNING AROUND TOWN WITH SWORDS!!
THEY MAY BE TOUGH, BUT THIS IS NONE OF THEIR BUSINESS!
T/N: THAT'S A BUDDHIST SAYING.
……
HEY, THEY'VE FOUND ANOTHER SUSPICIOUS CORPSE! THIS ONE'S SUPPOSEDLY BEEN FROZEN TO DEATH!
YOU FOOL!! TAKE YOUR GOSSIP ELSEWHERE. WE'RE TOO BUSY HERE!!
…THE END IS NIGH.*
KILL THEM ALL!
SFX: SLASH

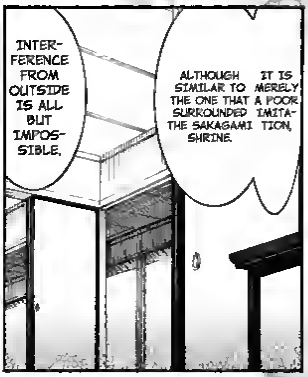

Hiss
Whoosh
Hisss
Bend
SFX: FOLD X2
SFX: FOLD

!?
FOLD
SFX. SHOCK
SFX. FWOOOM!
SFX. CRUMPLE X3
!?
!?
SFX. HISSSSS
GA-
AAA-
AH!
SFX. UWAAAAAAAAAH!!
SMOKE
SMOKE
S...
SMTY...
GIGGLE
GIGGLE
HMM..
WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A LITTLE BREAK?
SIIIIGH
HOHO
THAT'S NO GOOD.
GIGGLE

IT'S SUMMER...
BUT THIS PLACE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE REAL WORLD
HERE YOU GO
HAVE SOME TEA.
OH...
THANKS...
CLATTER
OH?
SORRY, BUT I'M JUST NOT MAKING MUCH PROGRESS...
YOU CAN'T RUSH THIS SORT OF THING, RIKUGOU-DONO.
TIME FLOWS DIFFERENTLY HERE AND IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD
YOU SHOULD TAKE YOUR TIME.
WHY DON'T YOU HAVE A TEA CAKE, TOO?
YEAH...
THANKS, THOUGH.
THERE'S A WARM BREEZE BLOWING, AND I'M GETTING SUNBURN FROM BEING OUTSIDE...


IT'S STILL KINDA HARD... TO BELIEVE WE'RE INSIDE AN ILLUSION!
OHO
DO YOU LIKE IT?
IT'S MY OLD LADY SPECIAL!

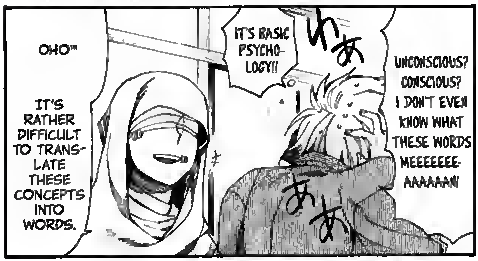
SFX BUZZ BUZZZZZZ
THIS PLACE IS LIKE OUR MOBILE FRONT-LINE BASE!
HA HA HA

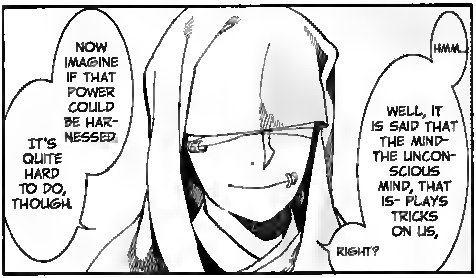

INTER-FERENCE FROM OUTSIDE IS ALL BUT IMPOS-SIBLE.
ALTHOUGH IT IS SIMILAR TO MERELY THE ONE THAT A POOR-SURROUNDED IMITA-THE SAKAGAMI TION, SHRINE.

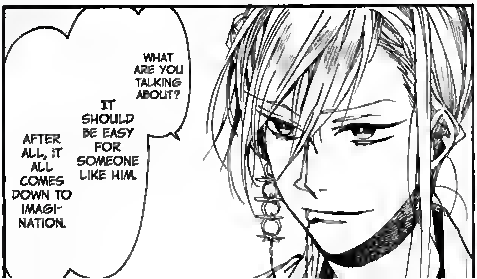
...YEAH. I GUESS SINCE EVERYTHING GOT SUCKED UP BY THE BLACK SMOKE FROM THAT GIANT HOLE, IT MUST HAVE BEEN HARD TO MAKE THIS...
YES, QUITE.
BUT ISN'T IT NICE?

SO HOW'S THE SPECIAL TRAINING COMING ALONG?
BONTEN!
DID YOU INSPECT THE AREA?
YEAH. THERE'S A DISRUPTION TWO HOURS TO THE WEST OF HERE. A POISON SWAMP I HADN'T SEE BEFORE.
OH?
AND WHAT OF THE ROCK-SLIDE ON THE CLIFFS TO THE EAST?
IT'S STABILIZED FOR NOW BUT THE GROUND IS STILL PRETTY SHAKY SO WE'LL HAVE TO KEEP AN EYE ON IT
I SEE.
BUT FOR NOW,
WE STILL HAVE TIME, RIGHT?
YEAH.
RIGHT NOW, WE'RE INSIDE AN ILLUSION
I'M SUPPOSED TO BE TRAINING TO USE MY POWER AS THE "UNWRITTEN PAGE."
WAA-AAAH...
I'VE GOTTA TRY HARDER...

PRECONSCIOUSNESS IN PSYCHOANALYSIS THESE ARE UNCONSCIOUS THOUGHTS THAT CAN BE RECALLED AND TRANSFORMED INTO CONSCIOUS THOUGHTS


OHO™
IT'S RATHER DIFFICULT TO TRANS-LATE THESE CONCEPTS INTO WORDS.
IT'S BASIC PSYCHO-LOGY!!
UNCONSCIOUS? CONSCIOUS? I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THESE WORDS MEEEEEEE-AAAAAAN!


NOW IMAGINE IF THAT POWER COULD BE HAR-NESSED.
IT'S QUITE HARD TO DO, THOUGH.
HMM...
WELL, IT IS SAID THAT THE MIND-THE UNCON-SCIOUS MIND, THAT IS- PLAYS TRICKS ON US,
RIGHT?



YOUR PRO-BLEM...
IS THATYOU'RE LETTING YOUR THOUGHTS INTERFERE WITH THE IMAGE YOU'RE TRYING TO VISUALIZE...
WHEN YOU CAN GIVE SHAPE TO YOUR SHAPE LESS THOUGHTS, YOU-LL BE ABLE TO CREATE ANY FORM YOU WANT

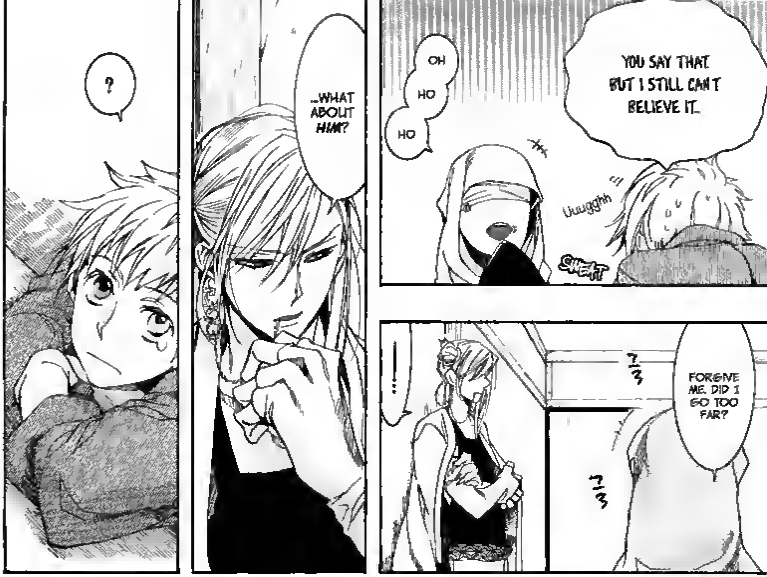
IMAGIN-ATION, HUH..?
ACC-ORD-ING TO HIZAME-SAN,
THIS "POWER" I HAVE COMES FROM PUTTING MY STRONG IMAGINATION TO USE.
BUT BACK THEN, HIZAME-SAN WAS ABLE TO OVERPOWER MY THOUGHTS IN AN INSTANT
WE ALL HAVE THE POWER TO MISLEAD, DECEIVE AND INFLUENCE THE MINDS OF OTHERS.
IT'S SOME-THING EVERYONE DOES
ALL IT TAKES IS A LITTLE "SUGGES-TION".
WELL, IT'S EASY TO FOOL OTHER PEOPLE.
IT'S MUCH HARDER TO FOOL YOUR-SELF
AND THAT'S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO
BASICALLY, YOU HAVE TO BE LIKE A PRO HYPNOTIST, BUT USE THE POWER OF SUGGESTION ON YOUR-SELF
!?
UM, OKAY...
UH... I'M TOTALLY LOST HERE...
BUT..

I DON'T KNOW IF I'M SMART ENOUGH TO FOOL PEOPLE LIKE SHINONOME AND HIZAME-SAN...
HMM...
Hmm...
I need a suggestion right?
AND THAT TIME WITH THE YAKOU?
WHAT ABOUT THAT TIME WITH THE INU-GAMI?

DIDN'T YOU USE YOUR POWER TO HELP THAT FOX, IMAYOU? JUST TRY TO REMEMBER WHAT YOU DID THAT TIME.
HUH?
DON'T WORRY SO MUCH. YOU'VE DONE IT BEFORE, SO YOU CAN DO IT AGAIN.

BOTH TIMES, I FEEL LIKE I HAD A LOT OF HELP FROM OTHER PEOPLE.
THAT'S BEEN BOTHERING ME, YOU KNOW?
WHY DOES EVERYONE THINK IT WAS MY POWER?
THE SAME THING GOES FOR THAT TIME WITH THE YAKOU...
UMM... WELL, I KINDA PASSED OUT AFTER THAT, SO I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER IT THAT WELL...

I THOUGHT PERHAPS MY OWN POWER COULD BE USED IN THE SAME WAY, TO SOME DEGREE,
SHE HAD THE ABILITY TO ALTER THE VERY SHAPE AND FLOW OF REALITY...
SO DECIDED TO GIVE IT A TRY
WELL, I BECAME INTERESTED WHEN I FIRST HEARD OF THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE POWERS POSSESSED BY THE PRIESTESS SHINSHU.
HM?
YOU'RE A LOT BETTER AT THIS THAN I AM, HIZAME-SAN.
ORIGAMI IS JUST THE VEHICLE FOR MY THOUGHTS TO MANIFEST IN THE REAL WORLD
LIKE SO
AND I REALIZED I COULD TAKE THINGS I HAD SEEN AND BRING THEM TO LIFE IN MY MIND
IT'S ALMOST LIKE HAVING THE POWER OF A GOD
FLUTTER
YOU COULD TURN "NOTHINGNESS" INTO "BEING."
YOU COULD SEE THAT WHICH IS UNSEEN.
HOP
THE UNWRITTEN PAGE WOULD HAVE THAT ABILITY.
HOWEVER,
I DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO ALTER THE DIRECTION OF THE WORLD.
BUT MY ABILITY REQUIRES THAT INTERMEDIATE VEHICLE.



SFX. GIGGLE X2

SFX JUMP

SFX. CLATTER X2

THIS ILLUSION WAS FORMED BY "GIVING SHAPE TO THE SHAPELESS." THE SAME WAY AYAKASHI EXIST WE'RE JUST USING THIS SPACE AS MY TRAINING GROUND
I CAN DO THIS.
ACCORDING TO HIZAME-SAN.
UM. O-OKAY
OKAY I JUST HAVE TO IMAGINE...
THAT HEIHACHI-SAN AND THE NAGAYA ARE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS DOOR.
I JUST HAVE TO DO WHAT I DID BEFORE... AND NOT OVER-THINK IT
SFX. HUFF X 4
AYAKASHI CAN OPEN DOORS OUTOF NOWHERE,
OPEN!
WOW, THERE WASN'T A ROOM HERE BEFORE, RIGHT?
SO ALL I HAVE TO DO... IS TO CREATE AN EXIT HERE.
IF I CAN "GIVE SHAPE TO THE SHAPELESS" LIKE HIZAME-SAN AND THE AYAKASHI,
THEN THAT'S THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS BEING ABLE TO "GIVE EXISTENCE TO THE IMAGINARY," RIGHT?

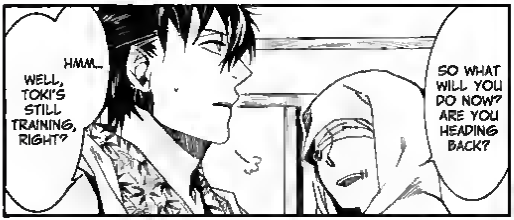
SFX. SLAM
HEY
HA!
What the...
...THAT'S THE IDEA AHHHAH.
...WHAT IS HE DOING? I brought food.
BUT I CAN'T EVEN GET PAST STEP ONE HERE!
UWAA-AAH!?
SFX. SLIDE
I SUCK AT THIS..
WAA-AAA-AAA-AAA-AAA-AH
MUMBLE MUMBLE.

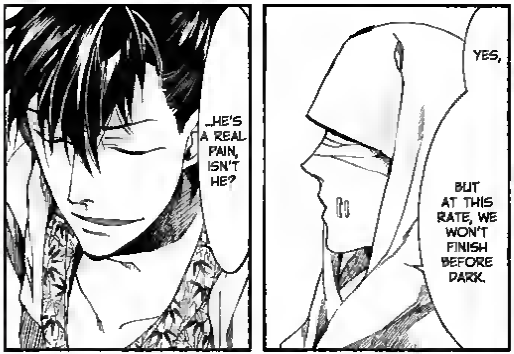
IT'S NO GOOD.
...SO?
ざわ
ざわ
WELL,
IT'S LIKE SMOKE, SO IT TRAVELS FAST.
ざわ
ざわ
IT'S BEEN AN HOUR AND ALREADY THE DISTURBANCE IS SPREADING
SFX. MUMBLE X2
SFX. MUMBLE X2
WELL,
WHO KNOWS IF WHAT I'VE BEEN TOLD IS ACTUALLY CORRECT
FROM WHAT I UNDERSTAND, THIS KIND OF SPACE IS A DANGER TO THE HUMAN WORLD, SO PERHAPS THAT'S A GOOD THING
?
UH...

WELL, I AM A NINJA AFTER ALL.
!
AREN'T YOU ACTING AWFULLY CALM IF YOU DON'T KNOW FOR SURE?
SO...
PERHAPS, BUT AN OPPONENT WHO NEEDS TO BE TOLD EVERYTHING IS EASY TO READ.
YOU ARE WAA-AAAAY TOO LAID BACK.
SOMETIMES IT'S BETTER NOT TO KNOW, ISN'T IT?
SMILE
!
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW SOME-THING, YOU SHOULD GO LOOK FOR IT YOURSELF!
LIKE WE ARE NOW!

IF YOU'RE ALWAYS PESTERING OTHERS TO EXPLAIN THINGS FOR YOU,
THEN YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN A WHINY CHILD
AND NO ONE EVER TELLS CHILDREN ANYTHING
WELL, THEN.
I SHOULD BE GOING
!
SFX JUMP
SFX WHOOSH

NAH,
IT'S NOT THAT GOOD.
BUT STILL, I APOLOGIZE FOR ASKING YOU TO PREPARE IT FOR ME.
OH! THIS TEA IS DELICIOUS.


HMM... WELL, TOKI'S STILL TRAINING, RIGHT?
SO WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW? ARE YOU HEADING BACK?


...HE'S A REAL PAIN, ISN'T HE?
YES, BUT AT THIS RATE, WE WON'T FINISH BEFORE DARK.

WELL, WE DON'T REALLY HAVE TIME FOR THAT.
SO I GUESS HE'S TAKING IT EASY, HUH?

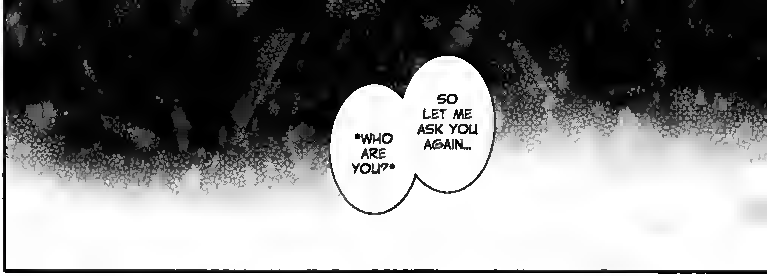
ISN'T SOMEONE ELSE BEING A LITTLE UNFAIR, TOO?
SO WE'RE NOT BEING FAIR?
YOU TOLD HIM HE HAD PLENTY OF TIME DIDN'T YOU?
DON'T HAVE TIME...
WAIT A MINUTE!
...
HOW CAN YOU JUST RUSH HIM THROUGH THIS!?
SOMEONE LIKE... YOU?
YOU'RE DESPERATELY HOLDING BACK, AREN'T YOU?
BUT YOU STAND BACK AND CRITICIZE PEOPLE WHO DO THAT'S PRETTY SHAMELESS, ISN'T IT?
YOU WON'T TAKE ANY ACTION,
ぎりっ
WHAT DID YOU SAY...!!?
SFX: GLARE

HOW-EVER,
WE KNOW THAT WHAT WE DO IS NECESSARY, SO WE REFUSE TO BE INACT-IVE.
HE'S RIGHT, THOUGH.
RIGHT NOW, YOU STAND IDLE AND WATCH BECAUSE YOU DON'T TRUST US.
NOW, NOW
THERE'S NOTHING TO GET WORKED UP ABOUT
CALM DOWN, CALM DOWN.
DAMN IT.
SIGH
AND I HOPE THAT YOU WILL OFFER US YOUR HELP.
I HOPE YOU CAN AT LEAST UNDERSTAND THAT
YOU AND HIM BOTH... LIKE THERE'S SOME KIND OF DIFFER-ENCE...!
THE "NEW" ME... THE "OLD" ME...
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR... THIS BULL-SHIT...!

YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO JUDGE PEOPLE LIKE THAT..!
?
...YOU'RE RIGHT. NO ONE LIKES BEING LABELED BY SOMEONE ELSE.
FROM THE MOMENT I FIRST SAW YOU, I WONDERED...
SO LET'S BE HONEST AND ADULT WITH EACH OTHER.

WHAT ARE YOU?
WE'VE BEEN CALLING YOU THE "FORMER" UNWRITTEN PAGE...
BUT I THINK THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN THAT
WHATEVER IT IS...
YOU'RE AS INVOLVED IN THIS AS WE ARE. YOU AND RIKUGOU ARE CAUGHT UP IN THE SAME STORM.

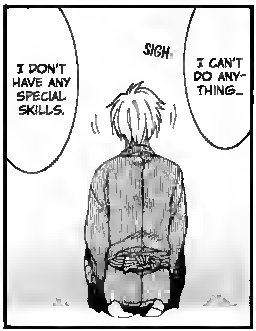
BUT UNTIL NOW, IT SEEMED AS IF YOU'D ESCAPED THAT STORM AND ENTERED HEAVEN'S NET
YOU BECAME AN ORDINARY HUMAN.
BUT HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?
DID YOU LOSE TO TEITEN'S POWER?
I DON'T THINK SO.
BACK THEN, AT THE SHRINE...
YOU, A SUPPOSEDLY NORMAL HUMAN, AWAKENED THE POWER OF THE UNWRITTEN PAGE.
ARE YOU IMAGINING IT? GOOD.
YOU KNOW HOW TO ALTER HEAVEN'S NET. THERE'S NO WAY YOU WERE OVER POWERED BY TEITEN
YOU COVERED RIKUGOU'S EYE, ALMOST AS IF YOU KNEW IT WOULD INCREASE HIS POWER.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU JUST "COINCIDENTALLY" MANAGED TO INVOKE AND USE THE POWER OF THE UNWRITTEN PAGE.
YOU ALREADY KNEW OF RIKUGOU'S POWER, AND HOW TO AWAKEN IT.
UNLESS...

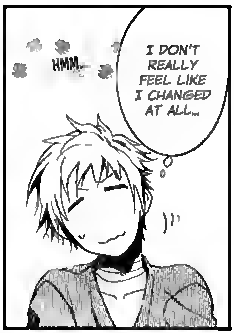


The old me...

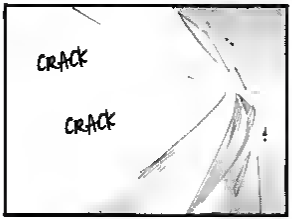
And the new me...

When did I change?





SFX. SLAM SLAM



SFX. THUMP, SHOCK, GASP

SFX. CRACK X2

But at least...

SFX. CRASH

SFX GLARE
I think I'm finally at a point...
HEY.
LONG TIME NO SEE.
UH...
IWA-AH.
Where I'm not going to run away anymore.
...Probably

SHOCK

easy going scans
www.egscans.com

Amatsuki v12 ch 72 Translator Notes

PAGE 111

THESE ARE LYRICS TO THE JAPANESE FOLK SONG "TOORYANSE." IN THE FIRST VERSE, THE SINGER IS MAKING A SHRINE OFFERING FOR A CHILD'S SEVENTH BIRTHDAY; IN THE SECOND VERSE, THE CHILD HAS DIED AND THE SINGER IS OFFERING THEMSELF TO THE DEMON'S SHRINE. INCIDENTALLY, THEY PLAY THIS SONG AT CROSSWALKS IN JAPAN SO PEOPLE KNOW HOW MUCH TIME THEY HAVE LEFT TO WALK, BECAUSE APPARENTLY HAVING A NUMERICAL COUNTDOWN WOULDN'T BE CREEPY ENOUGH.

PAGE 116

ROUNINS ARE MASTERLESS SAMURAIS. IN THE 1800S, JAPAN'S SAMURAI CASTE SYSTEM WAS STARTING TO FALL APART. SAMURAIS WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO WORK NORMAL JOBS, BUT AFTER 200 YEARS OF RELATIVE PEACE, FEW MASTERS COULD AFFORD TO EMPLOY LARGE NUMBERS OF SOLDIERS. THUS, THOUSANDS OF SAMURAIS WERE LEFT UNEMPLOYED WITH NO CAREER PROSPECTS. MOST MADE THEIR WAY TO THE CITIES IN HOPE OF FINDING WORK APPROPRIATE TO THEIR SOCIAL CLASS, BUT FEW SUCCEEDED. CITIES LIKE EDO WERE LEFT WITH LARGE NUMBERS OF DISCONTENTED, HEAVILY ARMED VAGRANTS WHO OFTEN SYMPATHIZED WITH THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT MOVEMENT.

PAGE 117

NOTE: ("DOZAEMON" IS EDO-PERIOD SLANG FOR A DROWNED CORPSE. NARUSEGAWA DOZAEMON WAS A FAMOUS EDO PERIOD SUMO WRESTLER WHOSE BODY WAS VERY PALE AND BLOATED, MAKING HIM LOOK LIKE A DROWNING VICTIM.

PAGE 122

HE USES THE WORD "KEMONOMICHI", WHICH LITERALLY MEANS "ANIMAL PATH." IT'S THE SAME ILLUSION THAT OBSCURED THE WAY TO THE SAKAGAMI SHRINE LIKE, 70 CHAPTERS AGO.

PAGE 124

SIGMUND FREUD, THE FAMOUS PSYCHOLOGIST, MADE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN UNCONSCIOUS THOUGHTS THAT ARE REPRESSED AND THOSE THAT ARE NOT. THE UNREPRESSED MEMORIES ARE THE "PRECONSCIOUS" TOTAL OF A PERSON'S MIND. THESE PRECONSCIOUS MEMORIES CAN BE ACCESSED FREELY BY THE CONSCIOUS MIND. SO BONTEN IS TELLING TOKI TO TAP INTO THIS RESERVOIR OF KNOWLEDGE.

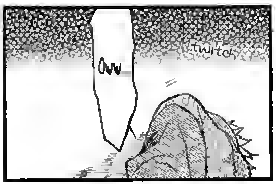
CHAPTER 73: THRESHING THE WHEAT / ORANGE

SFX: CHOKE
HOW THE HELL DO I GET OUT OF HERE?!
UH, YOU LOOK KINDA THIN... SHE DID REMEMBER TO FEED YOU, RIGHT?
HUH?
TREMBLE
HA HA HA
SO I GUESS HIZAME-SAN WAS KEEPING YOU LOCKED UP IN HERE, HUH?
SFX: SHOVE
GAH!
...YO.
twitch
LONG TIME NO SEE.
SFX: GLARE

OH SHIT...
HE'S REALLY GOING TO KILL ME!
THE EXIT?
GAAH!
!?
WHERE
IS
SFX. SQUEEZE GASP
SFX. GASP GASP
SFX. PUSH
COUGH
COUGH
HE'S AN ANIMAL...
BUT WE'RE BOTH LOOKING FOR THE SAME THING I GUESS.
COUGH
COUGH
STUMBLE
Let me go!
Are you
SQUEEZE
Trying to kill me!?
SFX. GLARE

GRR
DO YOU EVEN HAVE TO ASK!?
.....?
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO IF YOU GET OUT?
SHOCK
WHERE IS IT...
GLARE
!
COUGH
!
YOU HAVE SOME KIND OF LINK TO THE INUGAMI, RIGHT?
YOU COULD FIND KUCHIHA!
WHAT'S WRONG, YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE SHE IS?
HA!
IT SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM FOR YOU, RIGHT?
!!

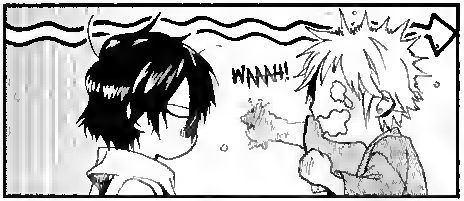
GAH!
SFX THUD
YOU BAS-TARD
SFX KICK


Ouu..
twitch

This.. really hurts..
Ugh.. Damn it...

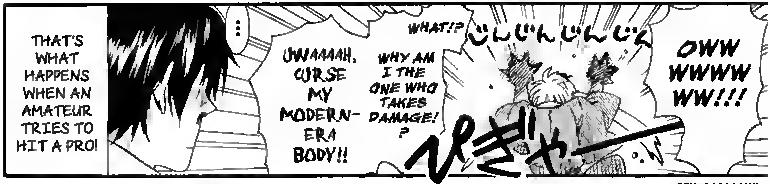
SAY ANOTHER WORD AND I'LL PUNCH YOUR FACE IN!
YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO TALK TO ME LIKE THAT!!

TOO BAD...
SQUEEZE
BUT YOU'VE PUSHED ME TO THIS POINT...
I REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND PEOPLE WHO ARE INTO FIGHTING...
WHAT'S SO FUN ABOUT BEING IN CRIPPLING PAIN?
WHINE
whine
WORRIE
I'M A PACIFIST...
!?
SURPRISE
SFX: PUNCH
DAMN IT!
!?
POOF

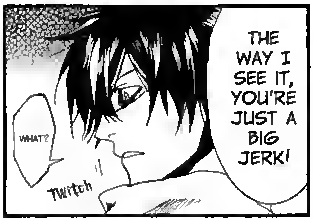


SFX. SMASH

SFX. FLAIL FLAIL FLAIL


THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN AMATEUR TRIES TO HIT A PRO!
...
JWAAAAH, CURSE MY MODERN-ERA BODY!!
WHY AM I THE ONE WHO TAKES DAMAGE!?
WHAT!?
じんじんじんじん
OWW WWWW WW!!!

SFX. GAAAAAH!!



WHY YOU?!!
SFX. GRAB

!?
GOTCHA!

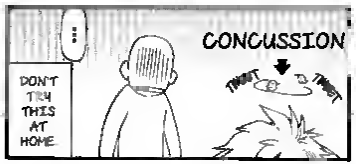
HA!

TAKE THIS!!
SFX SMASH

FLOP

WOBBLE

THRO
AH!!
GAAH...
THRO


...
DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME
CONCUSSION
TWIST
TWIST

HIZAME!!
GET ME THE HELL OUT OF HERE!!
AND QUIT FUCKING AROUND WITH ME LIKE THIS!!
YOU DUM BASS!
SMACK!
LET ME OUT!!
YOU CRAZY OLD HAG!!
HEY...
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YELLING IS GOING TO CONVINCE HER TO LET YOU OUT?
SHIFTLY
SHE STARTED IT!!
IT'S NOT MY FAULT!!
SHEESH...
YOU'RE TOO LOUD...
IT'S RUDE!
DO YOU REALLY THINK HIZAME-SAN DESERVES TO HEAR THAT KIND OF CRAP?

WHAT ARE YOU EVEN GOING TO DO IF YOU GET OUT?
ARE YOU PLANNING TO GO RUN OFF AND FIND KUCHIHA ON YOUR OWN?
KRSTLE
YOU KNOW THE YAKOU'S GOT SWARMS OF ENSLAVED AYAKASHI OUT THERE, RIGHT?
EVEN I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HER INSIDE THAT BLACK SMOKE...
DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN FIND HER WITHOUT ANY LEADS TO GO ON!?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING!?
JUST CHILL OUT OKAY!? DO I HAVE TO DUMP A BUCKET OF COLD WATER ON YOU!?
ARE YOU SAYING I SHOULD JUST GIVE UP!? YOU'RE PATHETIC!!
AND YOU'RE AN ASSHOLE!! DON'T CALL ME PATHETIC WHEN I'M ONLY TRYING TO HELP YOU!!!
TRY LISTENING TO SOMEBODY ELSE FOR A CHANGE!!
YOU'RE NOT ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING LIKE THIS!

LOOK. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU INTEND TO DO AFTER YOU GET OUT OF HERE.
BUT I DO KNOW THAT YOU'RE GOING TO END UP GETTING YOURSELF KILLED OR AT LEAST BADLY HURT!
THE PEOPLE FROM THE DIVINATION BUREAU PROBABLY LOCKED YOU UP IN HERE BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T WANT YOU TO GET HURT!
EVERYBODY IS TRYING TO HELP YOU.
AND YOU'VE JUST BEEN ACTING LIKE A DOUCHEBAG!!
WILL THE POWER YOU GOT FROM THE DOG GOD MAKE YOU INVINCIBLE? UNLESS YOU'RE IMMORTAL, THIS IS JUST SUICIDE!! YOU MAY BE POSSESSED BY THE DOG GOD BUT DO YOU REALLY WANT TO DIE LIKE A DOG TOO!?
YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST ABANDON EVERYONE ELSE AND DO WHATEVER YOU WANT? GET A GRIP! YOU WOULDN'T HAVE FOOD OR A PLACE TO LIVE WITHOUT THEM!! THERE REALLY IS NO HOPE FOR IDIOTS LIKE YOU!!
DON'T BE SO NAIVE!
SQUEEZE
...!

I SWORE...
...THAT I WOULD SAVE KUCHIHA,
AND I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU FUCK IT ALL UP.
SFX: TWITCH
SFX: GRRRRRRRRRRRR
SFX: GLARE

...OH?
CHIRP
...WHAT'S THIS? YOU'RE FIGHTING LIKE A PAIR OF KITTY CATS
Eh?
SFX GRRR
PLAY-FIGHTING OR NOT, BAD K KITTIES MUST BE PUN-ISHED.
I CAN'T HAVE YOU STUPID CATS MAKING SO MUCH NOISE...
SO I'LL HAVE TO GIVE YOU A GOOD BEAT-ING.
KAN-ZOU...
...KIT-TENS, HUH?
SFX LOOM

WAIT WAIT WAIT!
AIKEZU-SAN, IT WAS PARTLY MY FAULT TOO...
ACCEPT YOUR PUNISH-MENT!
SFX. GLARE
SHOCK
!!!
SFX. SLASH, GAAAAAAAAH
HM..
TOSS
YOSHI NOBU-SAMA?
SPLASH
SPLASH

WE'VE ARRESTED RONIN AND EVEN HIGH-RANKING SAMURAI WHO HAVE ATTEMPTED TO TURN AGAINST US WITH THE REBELLION'S STRINGS CUT, WE SHOULD FINALLY HAVE A MOMENT OF PEACE
JUST... IT SEEMS THAT EVERYONE IS LOSING THEIR MINDS.
OH, IT'S NOTHING
HOW MAY I SERVE YOU, MY LORD?
I JUST THINK THERE ARE BETTER WAYS OF RESOLVING OUR ISSUES
VIOLENT UPRISINGS, GOVERNMENT SUPPRESSION...
NO ONE STOPS TO THINK!
I SUPPOSE. I JUST FEEL THAT EVERYONE IS BEING A BIT TOO HASTY.
THE PRO-GOVERNMENT AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT FORCES BOTH SEEM READY TO MAKE THEIR MOVE... YOU LOOK WORRIED, MY LORD
HAHA!
WHEN THE FOREIGN BARBARIANS COME, WE'LL BE PROTECTED BY ALL THOSE EVIL SPIRITS!
HAHA-
I'VE HEARD THAT DEMONS HAVE BEEN ATTACKING HUMANS EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT IT
WELL, IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN MAYBE THIS COUNTRY IS SAFE AFTER ALL!
AND THE INFECTED ARE ROBBED OF ALL REASON.
IT'S ALMOST AS IF THERE'S A TERRIBLE DISEASE GOING AROUND...
AND IT'S NOT ONLY HUMANS THAT ARE AFFECTED
IT'S JUST SO STRANGE...
THEY'RE PLANNING SOME THING
AND WHEN THE SIGNAL COMES FROM ACROSS THE SEA, THEY'LL ATTACK...
ACTUALLY, THE FOREIGNERS ARE WHAT I'M MOST WORRIED ABOUT RIGHT NOW, TATSUGORO.

JAPAN WILL BE A PUPPET STATE RULED BY AMERICANS
AND WHEN THAT HAPPENS, IT'S ALL OVER
THIS COUNTRY IS FINISHED
HMM
HM, PERHAPS
THE ROLE OF A LEADER IS TO PROTECT THE COUNTRY, RIGHT, TATSUEOROU?
I'M ASSUMING YOU HAVE SOME SORT OF PLAN, YOSHINOBU-SAMA?
THIS IS SERIOUS
WILL I BE ABLE TO TAKE HIS PLACE?
HE'S JUST SO HONEST AND PURE.
WITH HIS MARRIAGE TO PRINCESS KAZUNOMIYA, HE FORMED A BOND WITH THE IMPERIAL COURT.
I WONDER... WILL THIS MADNESS AND IF IT DOES... AFFECT HIM, TOO?
OH, HE FITS THE PART OF A LORD WELL ENOUGH, I SUPPOSE.
AND THAT'S WHERE HE FALLS FLAT.
HE HAS THE RIGHT LOOK, HE'S CLEVER, AND THE PEOPLE LIKE HIM.
OH, HE FITS THE PART OF A LORD WELL ENOUGH, I SUPPOSE

IN THE END, I SUPPOSE ALL THAT REALLY MATTERS IS THAT THE TOKUGAWA FAMILY PERSEVERES
FLOAT
WHO KNOWS WHAT LIES BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THAT MAN.
SFX. SPLASH
THAT IS TRUE.
WHICHEVER WAY THE RIVER FLOWS, YOU WILL FLOAT ABOVE IT ALL, YOSHINOBU-SAN.
WELL, THEN.
WHY DON'T YOU ENJOY THOSE SWEETS I BROUGHT YOU, YOUR LORDSHIP?
TATSU-@OKOU,
I THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK
YES, SIR
!
BLINK
?
YOSHI-NOBU-SAN?
WHAT !? WHAT IS THAT ..!?
!?

ゴゴゴゴゴ
SFX: WOOOOSH

IT'S ONLY BEEN AN HOUR, BUT WE DON'T HAVE LONG BEFORE INVESTIGATORS WILL ARRIVE
WE'LL HAVE TO START THINKING ABOUT HOW TO BEST HIDE THE SITUATION FROM THE TOWNSPEOPLE...

SFX. WHISPER X3

ANYONE ABLE TO MOVE SHOULD LEAVE THIS PLACE IMMEDIATELY
THOSE WHO STAY BEHIND WILL DIE
EXCUSE ME EVERYONE,
BUT WE MUST SETTLE THIS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE

SFX. WHISPER X2

AT THE TIME OF THE ATTACK, I HAD JUST CONCLUDED A PRIVATE MEETING WITH HIS LORDSHIP, THE SHOUGUN.
BUT HIS CURRENT WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN.
IT HAS BEEN ENVELOPED IN THAT BLACK MIST.
THAT THE ENTIRE MAIN TOWER
NO HUMAN CAN PASS... NAY, NOT EVEN A DEMON CAN ENTER THAT TOWER.
THE MIST HAS CUT OFF ALL ENTRANCES TO THE CASTLE
!?
SFX GASP

WHAT!?

!?
!!

SFX: GASP

WE'LL REGROUP THERE AND FIGURE OUT WHAT'S HAPPENED!!
EVERYONE, GO NOW! TAKE THE SECRET ROUTE TO THE CASTLE!!

ONCE UPON A TIME,
THERE WAS A PRINCESS TRAPPED HIGH HIGH ATOP A TALL CASTLE.
THE YAKOU IS ATTACKING OUR LORD!
WE MUST GO TO HIM AT ONCE!!
WHAT IF SHE LET HER LONG HAIR HANG FROM THE WINDOW?
ALAS IT COULDN'T REACH HER PRINCE
SO SHE CUT IT OFF
WHAT IF SHE REACHED OUT HER HAND?
IT COULDN'T REACH HIM EITHER.
SO SHE CUT IT OFF
SHE CRIED OUT FOR HER PRINCE TO SAVE HER
BUT WHAT IF IT WASN'T THAT HER VOICE COULDN'T REACH HIM?
WHAT IF HE SIMPLY WASN'T WORTHY OF BEING HER PRINCE?

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A HERO. JUST BE YOUR-SELF. WHAT MATTERS IS THAT YOU'RE THERE FOR HER.
WHAT'S WRONG, TOKI-POKI?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT STUFF LIKE THAT.
COME TO ME, EVERYONE.
I'LL BE WAITING.

あまつき12 おわり

Amatsuki v12 ch 73 Translator Notes

PAGE 160

FOREIGN INVASION WAS A VERY REAL FEAR IN 1866, IN WHICH AMATSUKI IS SET. IN 1853, AFTER JAPAN HAD BEEN ALMOST COMPLETELY ISOLATED FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD FOR 250 YEARS, HEAVILY ARMED AMERICAN SHIPS APPEARED IN A HARBOR NEAR THE CAPITAL AND DEMANDED THAT JAPAN BE OPEN TO TRADE WITH THE UNITED STATES. ALTHOUGH NO SHOTS WERE FIRED, THE THREAT OF AN ATTACK WAS ALWAYS THERE. MOST JAPANESE CITIZENS FEARED AND RESENTED THE "FOREIGN BARBARIANS," BUT THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT CHOSE TO COMPLY WITH AMERICAN DEMANDS. THIS ONLY ADDED FUEL TO CENTURIES-OLD DISPUTES BETWEEN THE SHOUGUN AND OTHER POWERFUL SAMURAI. THE GOVERNMENT APPEARED TOO WEAK AND VULNERABLE TO FEND OFF A FOREIGN INVASION, MUCH LESS A CIVIL WAR.

KAZUNOMIYA WAS AN IMPERIAL PRINCESS AND THE WIFE OF SHōGUN TOKUGAWA IEMOCHI. SHE'D ORIGINALLY BEEN ENGAGED TO SOMEONE ELSE, BUT WITH THE SHōGUN'S GOVERNMENT IN A STATE OF DECLINE, AN ALLIANCE WAS DEEMED NECESSARY. THE IMPERIAL COURT WAS WEAK AS WELL, HAVING BEEN STRIPPED OF ALL REAL POWER CENTURIES BEFORE, BUT MANY SOUTHERN SAMURAI ADVOCATED OVERTHROWING THE SHōGUN AND REPLACING HIM WITH THE EMPEROR. THUS, PRINCESS KAZUNOMIYA WAS USED AS A POLITICAL PAWN TO DEMONSTRATE THE EMPEROR'S SUPPORT FOR SHōGUN IEMOCHI. WHEN IEMOCHI DIED, SHE WAS AGAIN MANIPULATED INTO SUPPORTING YOSHINOBU AS THE NEXT SHōGUN.

雨月夜

「あまつき」特別付録小冊子

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The cloth on Kichiji's forehead marks him as a kabuki actor who plays female roles. During the Edo period, women were banned from appearing on stage, so men played female parts. These female-role actors frequently doubled as prostitutes, so the government passed a law decreeing that actors had to shave their heads to look more "masculine." Undeterred, actors simply covered their foreheads with a purple cloth both on and off the stage. The purple cloth became so fashionable among popular kabuki actors that women started wearing them too!

Kichiji is performing one of the dances from *Honchou Nijuushikou*, a famous kabuki play that's akin to *Romeo and Juliet*, but with a happy ending. In the play, Princess Yaegaki and Prince Katsuyori are engaged to be married, but their families have been bitter enemies ever since Yaegaki's father stole a magic helmet from Katsuyori's father. Katsuyori plans to heal the rift between their families, so he fakes his own suicide on the eve of the wedding. Yaegaki is distraught. On the anniversary of his death, she performs an incense ritual to summon her fiancee's spirit. Katsuyori, who has disguised himself as a gardener in her father's house, suddenly appears to her. At first he denies that he is Katsuyori, but soon the lovers are reunited. However, Yaegaki's father recognizes the boy and intends to have him killed. Yaegaki begs for mercy, but her father is certain that the boy has come to steal the helmet. Yaegaki goes to the helmet to pray for Katsuyori's safety. She quickly realizes that the helmet is possessed by fox spirits. She puts on the helmet, and the fox spirits safely lead her across a half-frozen lake to warn Katsuyori. The two families reconcile, and Yaegaki and Katsuyori live happily ever after.

Volume 12 Special Chapter

Amatsuki ~ The Night Before

by Takayama Shinobu

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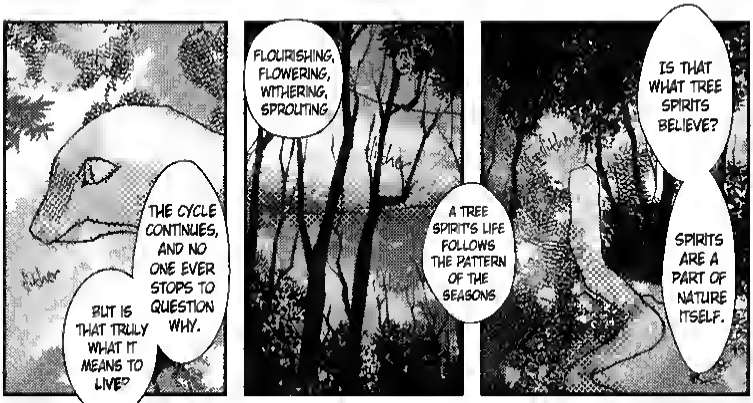
HUMANS HAVE A SAYING, YOU KNOW:
"CURIOSITY KILLED THE CAT."
Part 1: The Former Heaven's Seat
I SEE...
DON'T YOU THINK THERE'S SOME TRUTH IN THAT?
A PREY ANIMAL THAT FAILS TO ACT WITH CAUTION IS PRACTICALLY INVITING A PREDATOR TO CAPTURE IT.
BUT NOT ONLY PREY ANIMALS SHOULD BE WARY OF CURIOSITY
LIFE IS ULTIMATELY A RACE TO REPRODUCE BEFORE DEATH.
MALES FIGHT FOR FEMALES, WHILE THE FEMALES FIGHT FOR MALES
AND SO, IF YOU MUST BE "CURIOUS" ABOUT SOMETHING, BE CURIOUS ABOUT FINDING A MATE!
YOU MUST LEAVE A SEED OF YOURSELF BEHIND BEFORE YOU DIE.

. .IT LOOKS AS IF YOU WISH TO SAY SOME-THING.
MAS-TER...
IS THAT YOUR ADVICE FOR ME?
MASTER, YOU ARE WISER THAN ALL OTHERS, BUT...
YES, I'M WISE, AND THAT'S WHY I'M TELLING YOU TO BE SATISFIED WITH WHAT YOU HAVE.
YOU MUST ALSO ACT WITH CAUTION
OR YOU WILL DESTROY YOURSELF.
BUT MASTER...
THERE'S NO POINT IN LIVING JUST FOR THE [illegible] OF BEING ALIVE.

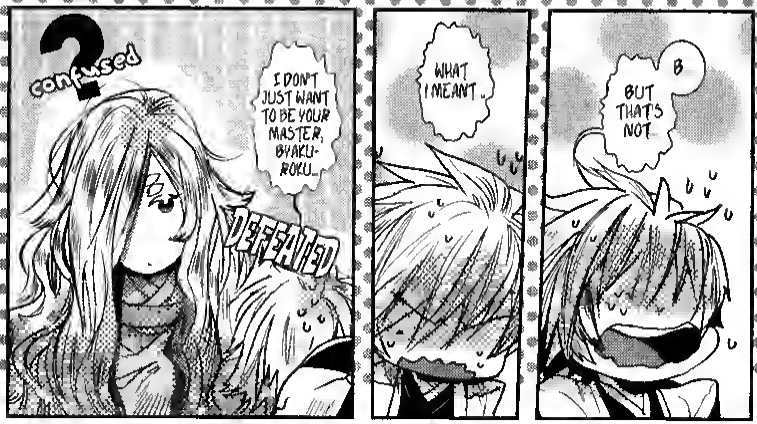

FLOURISHING, FLOWERING, WITHERING, SPROUTING
A TREE SPIRIT'S LIFE FOLLOWS THE PATTERN OF THE SEASONS
IS THAT WHAT TREE SPIRITS BELIEVE?
SPIRITS ARE A PART OF NATURE ITSELF.
THE CYCLE CONTINUES, AND NO ONE EVER STOPS TO QUESTION WHY.
BUT IS THAT TRULY WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE?

TO A TREE SPIRIT, ALL LIVING THINGS ARE MERELY BRANCHES OR SEEDS.

IS THERE ANY REASON...
slither
slither
WITHOUT CURIOSITY...
TO BE ALIVE?

YOU'RE A SNAKE, SO...
WHY ARE YOU TAKING CARE OF THAT BIRDBRAIN INSTEAD OF EATING HIM?
UM, BYAKU-ROKU...
THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN MEANING TO ASK YOU...
NEVER MIND.
UH... I MEAN...
FUN...?
BECAUSE IT'S FUN.

AHH, I SEE.
nod nod
NO WAY!!
SPUTTER!
...TSUYU-KUSA, ARE YOU JEALOUS OF HIWA?
IS THAT WHAT THIS IS?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
THAT GUY ISN'T FUN AT ALL!!
POUT
3
I DON'T CARE IF IT'S WEIRD! I WANT TO LIVE WITH YOU!
BUT I THINK YOU'RE FUN TOO.
WELL, I SUPPOSE IT'S ALSO A BIT STRANGE FOR A DEMON TO BE RAISING A TREE SPIRIT,
IT'S MY JOB TO FUSS AND WORRY OVER YOU.
YOU ARE THE CHILD OF MY MASTER, PRODUCED FROM HIS CUTTING.
THERE'S NO NEED FOR YOU TO WORRY.
NOW, NOW.
AFTER ALL, YOU ARE MY MASTER NOW.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE WORRYING ABOUT ME.



YES, I'M WISE, AND THAT'S WHY I'M TELLING YOU TO BE SATISFIED WITH WHAT YOU HAVE
MASTER, YOU ARE WISER THAN ALL OTHERS, BUT...
OR YOU WILL DESTROY YOURSELF.
YOU MUST ALSO ACT WITH CAUTION

BUT MASTER...

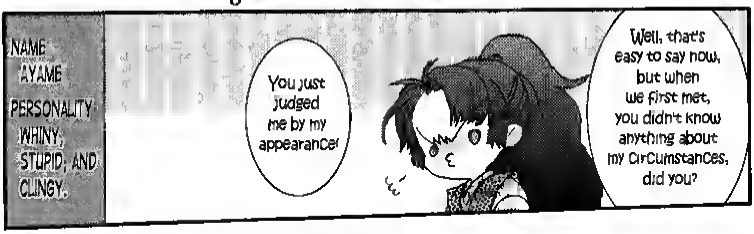
WHAT IF I WELCOME MY OWN DESTRUCTION?

CURIOSITY MAY KILL ME.
BETWEEN HUMANS AND DEMONS?
HEY, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE...
THAT CHILD MAY KILL ME.
BUT FROM THE MOMENT HE TOUCHED MY HAND, I'VE HAD NO REGRETS.
THE DAY WE MET.
I WILL NEVER REGRET...
THE END

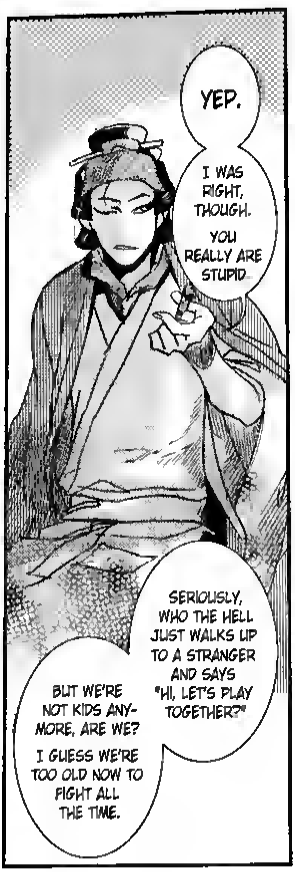
sob
sob
sob
sob
If only I weren't so helpless and weak...
If only there was an easy way to be strong...
Cry
cry...
Cry
YOUR FATHER IS GONE!!
YOUR MOTHER'S GONE TOO!!
SMACK
YOU'RE SUCH A WHINY BRAT!!
CRYING WON'T BRING YOUR PARENTS BACK!!
YOU'RE JUST A CRYBABY!!
I know
I think I'm pathetic, too.

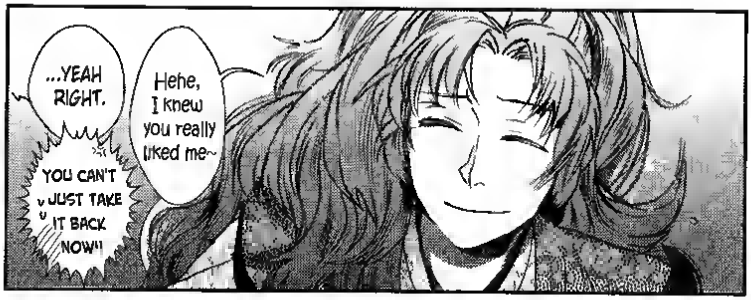
I THINK IT WAS REALLY YOUR FAULT THAT I CRIED SO MUCH BACK THEN...
IT HURTS JUST TO REMEMBER IT!
YOU WERE SO MEAN!
...But you don't have to hit me all the time!
HAHA
SHUT UP!!
SMACK
TCH.
I DIDN'T CHOOSE FOR US TO BE ORPHANS.
I DIDN'T CHOOSE TO GET DUMPED WITH A THEATRE TROUPE.
BUT YOU GOTTA DO WHAT YOU GOTTA DO TO SURVIVE.
DON'T BLAME ME FOR YOUR PROBLEMS.
NO MATTER HOW YOU FEEL INSIDE, YOU'VE GOTTA SLAP ON A SMILE AND PRETEND YOU'RE HAPPY.
IF YOU WANNA CRY AT SOMEBODY, CRY AT THE BUDDHA.
HE'S A LOT NICER THAN I AM.
Part 3 Yoshiji (Kicchou) and Ayame

Amatsuki ~ The Night Before


NAME
AYAME
PERSONALITY
WHINY, STUPID, AND CLINGY.
You just judged me by my appearance!
Well, that's easy to say now, but when we first met, you didn't know anything about my circumstances, did you?

YEAH, PRETTY MUCH.
GLAD YOU FIGURED THAT OUT.
SULK
Yeah, yeah... I know I'm a stupid, know-nothing idiot!
No wonder you're always bullying me!


YEP.
I WAS RIGHT, THOUGH.
YOU REALLY ARE STUPID.
SERIOUSLY, WHO THE HELL JUST WALKS UP TO A STRANGER AND SAYS "HI, LET'S PLAY TOGETHER?"
BUT WE'RE NOT KIDS ANY-MORE, ARE WE?
I GUESS WE'RE TOO OLD NOW TO FIGHT ALL THE TIME.


...YEAH RIGHT.
Hehe, I knew you really liked me~
YOU CAN'T JUST TAKE IT BACK NOW!!

I MEAN, YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL ACTOR, AFTER ALL!
I GUESS I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED.
huff
ARGH, WHY IS IT SO HARD FOR YOU TO TALK ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS...!?
YOU SURE YOU'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT YOURSELF?
YOU SHOULD JOIN ME.
YOU'D BE GOOD ON STAGE.
YEAH, WELL, IF YOU EVER LEAVE THAT SHRINE.
:

!
AYAME, YOU'RE AN IDIOT.
YOU SHOULD CALL ME "KICCHOU."
AT LEAST YOU WERE CUTE AS A KID!
ARGGH!! DONT GIVE ME THAT WEIRD SMILE!
SMACK!
SMACK!
SMACK!
OW!!
Kichou, that hurts!
SMACK!
IT'S A STAGE NAME, BUT IT'S WHO I AM NOW.
IT'S THE SAME FOR YOU, RIGHT?
THEY'VE GIVEN YOU A NEW NAME TOO.
I'VE STUDIED AND SUFFERED TO REFINE MY SKILLS AS AN ACTOR... BUT I THINK HE HAS ME BEAT.
AT FIRST I BULLIED HIM AT EVERY CHANCE I GOT, BUT ONE DAY... I REALIZED THAT I DIDN'T REALLY HATE HIM.
A LONG TIME AGO, WHEN WE WERE JUST KIDS, I MET AN ORPHAN BRAT AT THE SHRINE.

I CAN'T TELL IF HE'S SMILING OR CRYING.
Not telling~
I DON'T WANT YOU TO FORGET THE REAL ME, SO I'M NOT TELLING.
RIGHT NOW, I CAN PLAY MY "ROLE" WITHOUT MUCH TROUBLE, BUT IF I EVER LOSE MYSELF...
I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER MY NAME
YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON WHO STILL CALLS ME "AYAME."
AND PLEASE TELL KOURO-SAMA THAT I'M SORRY.
SFX "cheering"

Then came the first anni-versary...
Of Katsuyori's supposed suicide
Praise be to the Buddha!
Praise be to the Buddha!
WOW... KICCHOU'S AMAZING TODAY.
HE REALLY IS! I'VE NEVER SEEN KICCHOU PERFORM WITH SUCH PASSION...
Yaegaki held a memorial service for her lover
HE LOOKS LIKE HIS HEART IS BREAKING
She burned a special incense to bring back his lost soul
And so Katsuyori disguised himself as a gardener and entered the Uesugi household.

"The gardener..."
"He looked so much like my Katsuyori."
"Oh, how I long to embrace him!"
"But what if I am mistaken?
What if he was nothing more than a memory?"
"I cannot live without my beloved."
"But perhaps we shall meet again..."
"In a world beyond death..."
"In a world of memories."
THE END

Part 3: The Divination Bureau
WHISPER
WHISPER
SHRIEK
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
HER BODY IS COVERED IN SCALES LIKE A FISH!
SEE THE TERRIBLE SNAKE WOMAN!
HER MOUTH IS SPLIT FROM EAR TO EAR!
STEP RIGHT UP, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, DON'T MISS OUT!
COME SEE THE WORLD'S MOST FEARSOME CREATURE!
YESSS AND YOU CAN ONLY SSSEE ME HERE.
I AM THE SNAKE WOMAN!
ALREADY I HAVE DEVOURED MANY HUMANSSS.
I AM FROM A DISSTANT LAND BUT NOW I HAVE COME TO EDO.

LOOK UPON ME IF YOU DARE~
COME CLOSSSER!
SHOCK
I'LL EAT YOU ALL!
BE-CAUSE ...
Whisper
IT IS A PLEASSSURE TO MEET YOU~
Whisper...
AHHHHHH
EEEK!
I AM A TRUE DEMON!

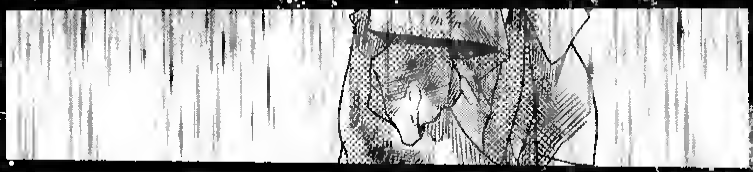
.....!?
SHOCK
Please, stay calm.
gasp
!?
Ohoho~ There's no need to be afraid
You're in the curiosity shop... well, it's more of a freak show, really. It's a bit cramped in here, but I swear no harm will come to you.
!?
You must have fainted
Ah, I suppose you don't remember...
I saw you lying on the ground so I brought you here
This is my room.
Aren't you hungry?
Why don't you have something to eat before you go home?

WHAT A POOR CHILD.
I THINK THAT'S A GOOD IDEA.
WE CAN'T JUST GO LOOKING FOR HIS PARENTS
whisper
whisper
SHOULDN'T WE REPORT HIM AS A MISSING CHILD?
gulp
gulp
BUT WHAT IF HE'S A RUNAWAY SERVANT?
WAAH!!
SHOCK!!!
Ah, that's no good at all!
people
!
!
?

You shouldn't run away before you finish your meal
Pull
YOU REALLY ARE DEMONS!!
YOU'RE...
Y-YOU...
EH!?
GASP
I wonder if he was thrown out of his home because of it.
Oh my...
GASP
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! HE CAN SEE US...?

...
Child,
Do you have a home to go back to?
You can come here whenever you feel hungry.
I only ask that you be a good child and help with the chores.
That settles it! You're welcome to come eat with us any time you like.
THAT'S RIGHT! THIS IS FOOLISHNESS!
WE'RE NOT BABY-SITTERS!
EVEN IF HE HAS THE SIGHT, HE'S JUST A CHILD. WHAT WILL WE DO WITH HIM?
BUT HIZAME-SAMA, THAT BOY IS...
MUTTER
THIS IS CRAZY!
Ah, perhaps I am a fool...

I'M USED TO BEING ABANDONED.


BUT WHY DOES IT ALWAYS HAPPEN TO ME?

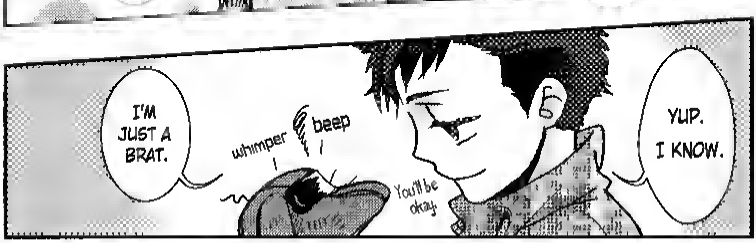
THAT'S BEACUSE...

ISN'T THAT RIGHT, BOY?
BUT PERHAPS THIS IS FATE...
THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE WEAK.
WHY DON'T YOU BECOME ONE OF US?
COME ON, BOY.
LET'S BE FRIENDS. WE CAN MAKE YOU STRONG.
COME WITH US.
KEKEKEKEKE

"Curiosity can do more things than kill a cat."
O. Henry, Schools and Schools (1909)

Part 4: Shinonome Ren

I GUESS THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A "GENIUS."
WHATEVER, YOU'RE STILL JUST A BRAT.
CORRECT.
BUT DANG, KID, YOU KNOW THE MOST RANDOM TRIVIA.



...IT'D BE FINE IF YOU HAD A NORMAL BRAIN, BUT WHEN A GENIUS LIKE YOU SAYS SOMETHING LIKE THAT, IT SOUNDS LIKE FALSE MODESTY.
OH YEAH?
Let me open you up.
I AM NORMAL, THOUGH
THAT'S JUST HOW THINGS ARE NOW
THANKS TO THE FALLING BIRTH RATE, KIDS GET ACCESS TO TOP QUALITY EDUCATION AND LIVING ENVIRONMENTS
WORDS LIKE "PRODIGY" ARE OBSOLETE
THE PEOPLE WHO SUCCEED ARE NORMAL, AND THE PEOPLE WHO FAIL ARE STUPID
I HEAR THEY'RE PRETTY ROUGH ON THE KIDS WHO CAN'T KEEP UP.
SUCCESS IS AN EXPECTATION.
IF YOU FAIL, THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH YOU.
BUT WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE AT THE OTHER EXTREME?
WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO GO BEYOND SUCCESS?
SO IT'S A GOOD THING I'M NORMAL, RIGHT?
QUIT ACTING LIKE YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT ME.
IT'S WEIRD.

IT ISN'T LIKE HIS PARENTS ARE OBSESSED WITH EDUCATION OR ANYTHING.
hm...
MAYBE THAT'S WHY
THEY'RE HIPPIES WHO LIVE OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, FARMING THE LAND AND LIVING IN HARMONY WITH NATURE AND ALL THAT SHIT
HE'S A GENIUS, BUT HE'S GOT NO SENSE OF PURPOSE.
IT'S GOTTEN TO THE POINT WHERE HE CAN'T RELATE TO OTHER KIDS
HE'S HAPPY WHENEVER HE FINDS SOMETHING HE DOESN'T ALREADY KNOW
BUT HIS OBSESSION WITH LEARNING NEW THINGS GOES WAY BEYOND THE NORM.
Awesome!
WOOF WOOF!
HE'S SMART BECAUSE HE HAS A STRONG SENSE OF CURIOUSITY

I like books.
It's fun to learn about the lives of people from the past.
I like nature.
The delicate balance of everything is really fascinating.
I like people.
Even if you study psychology, people will always surprise you.
Maybe it's because I know myself too well.
There are no surprises.
...SO WHY AM I SO BORED?
IT'S IRONIC, I GUESS.
WITH HIS NEED FOR CONSTANT STIMULATION, HE PROBABLY COULDN'T UNDERSTAND HIS PARENTS.

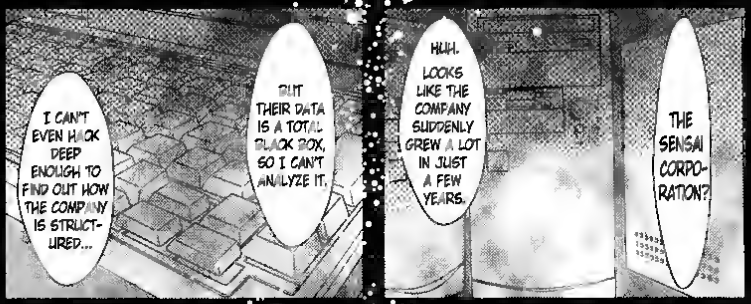
HONESTLY, THAT'S PROBABLY FOR THE BEST.
THERE'S NO WAY I COULD LIVE IN A LITTLE FARMING VILLAGE.
I'M GLAD THEY LEFT ME ON MY OWN IN THE CITY.
AND I GUESS I KINDA NEGLECT MY LITTLE SISTER.
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE EVEN TALKED TO HER.
I GUESS I DO KINDA RESENT MY PARENTS...
THEY'RE SO SECURE IN KNOWING WHAT THEY WANT TO DO WITH THEIR LIVES.
I know myself too well.
LIVING ON MY OWN GETS LONELY... BUT IT'S COMFORTABLE, TOO.
I only care about interesting things.
I GUESS THAT DEEP DOWN, I'M BORED WITH MYSELF.
Hehe, that would be good~~!
I hope it's something that makes money!
Hey, Kon, what weird hobby are you obsessed with now?
I don't want to be boring anymore.

I want lots of it, and I want it now!
ahaha
DUH!
YES!
You can't do anything without money!
WHY?
IS MAKING MONEY REALLY THAT IMPORTANT TO YOU?
To buy a car... or maybe to go gambling?
To buy clothes and handbags and games I guess?
Um...
WHAT?!
Um...
YOU ALREADY HAVE ENOUGH MONEY FOR THAT, DON'T YOU?
WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT?

sigh
But how can we make lots of money?
Stocks? Investments? Development?
That's right!
Well, it's good to have extra money in case something unexpected happens right?
Hm.
Probably nothing legal.
Yeah, is there anything else?
All of that stuff sounds kind of boring, though...
THE RISKS ARE LOW IF YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
YOU JUST HAVE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO TURN DATA INTO MONEY.
Huh?
How can you make money like that?
It's risky, though, and I'm not that good.
Or hacking companies?
It's like a game as long as you don't get caught!
How about robbing banks?
Or online schemes!

IF YOU CAN STEAL INFO ON A COMPANY'S TOP SECRET STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNOLOGY, THEY'LL DO ANYTHING TO PROTECT IT.
IF THAT INFORMATION GETS OUT, IT CAN CAUSE A LOT OF DAMAGE

Curiosity killed the cat...


I CAN'T EVEN HACK DEEP ENOUGH TO FIND OUT HOW THE COMPANY IS STRUCTURED...
BUT THEIR DATA IS A TOTAL BLACK BOX, SO I CAN'T ANALYZE IT.
HUH. LOOKS LIKE THE COMPANY SUDDENLY GREW A LOT IN JUST A FEW YEARS.
THE SENSAI CORPORATION?

But without curiousity...

Is there any point in living?

— THE END —

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